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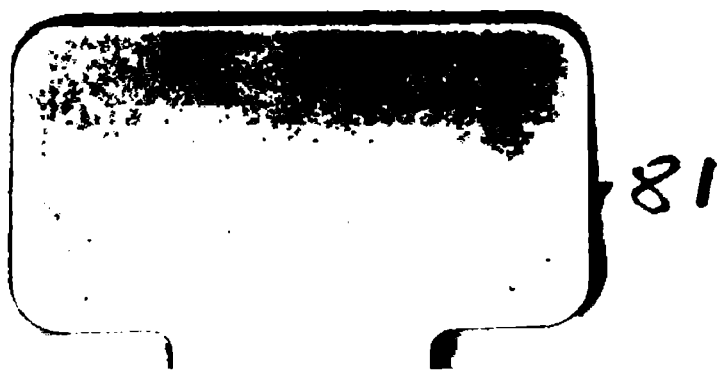
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THE

SLAVERY

OF THE

BRITISH WEST INDIA COLONIES

DELINEATED,

AS IT EXISTS

BOTH IN LAW AND PRACTICE,

AND COMPARED WITH

THE SLAVERY OF OTHER COUNTRIES, ANTIENT AND MODERN.

By JAMES STEPHEN, Esq.

VOL. II.

BEING A DELINEATION OF THE STATE IN POINT OF PRACTICE.

LONDON:
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RHODES HOUSE
OXFORD

TO

THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

SIRE,

IN humbly dedicating this volume to your Majesty, without having asked your gracious permission to do so, I am, perhaps, departing from ordinary rules; but if so, it is from no want of confidence in your royal condescension and benignity, qualities which have preeminently distinguished your Majesty from the first moment of your reign, and added to the high sentiment of loyalty, that of personal attachment, in the hearts of your faithful subjects. It isbecause, from peculiar considerations in a case of no ordinary kind, I think it more consistent with feelings of the most dutiful and profound respect towards your Majesty, to invoke publicly your royal attention to a work on the subject of colonial slavery, without presuming to ask for your consent.

The unfortunate and anomalous situation of a large class of your Majesty's subjects, of whom I am a feeble advocate, recommends their cause in a peculiar manner, to the audience and protection of the

throne. Over a large proportion of them your Majesty is the immediate and sole legislator; and *all* are destitute of any such share in the formation of the laws by which they are governed, as the other subjects of these United Kingdoms directly or indirectly enjoy in both Houses of Parliament. *Their* legislative influence exists in the heart of the Sovereign alone.

Nor have they that important resort, when aggrieved, either in the formation or administration of the laws, which their free fellow-subjects possess. They cannot state their wrongs or their sufferings by petitions, even to the common father of his people. They have no public voice; or none to which they dare give utterance.

To the generous feelings of your Majesty, these disabilities will become motives for listening, with patient and favourable attention, to a voluntary advocate of that helpless class, comprising near a million of your Majesty's subjects, who was long an eye-witness of their calamitous situation, and now desires to lay at the foot of your throne, a full account of it, supported by what will be found decisive evidence, for your Majesty's compassionate consideration.

It is their great further misfortune, especially that of the agricultural slaves, whose general lot is by far more severe than that of the domestics, that their situation and treatment are known, for the most part, only to those who have a deep interest in concealing all that is most oppressive in them from European minds, and exhibiting in a fallacious

view every real or pretended mitigation. It is not distance of position only that gives facility to such deceptions; for the nature of the system makes the discovery of its worst practical abuses extremely difficult, even on the spot, except to its immediate administrators, or persons long resident among them. Those oppressions, especially of the plantation slaves, which are at once the most general and most pernicious, the excess of their forced labour, and the insufficiency of their sustenance, are easily concealed from transient visitors; and can be estimated only by those who have seen them at all hours and seasons; and have been enabled to examine, in its details, the interior economy of the plantations.

To lay open these sources of error, and remove the misconceptions that have arisen from them in many upright and intelligent minds, have been leading objects in the work which I have now the honour humbly to present to your Majesty. For those purposes I have found it necessary to review the evidence given before Parliament near forty years ago, by some distinguished public characters, chiefly officers of high rank in the naval and military services, who had visited the colonies; and some of whom had been long on the West India station: not certainly with a view to impeach tbe sincerity of their opinions, or the respectability of their judgments; but, on the contrary, to shew that even such men, eminent though some of them were for their talents, as well as illustrious from their public services, were unable to avoid those errors into which strangers of distinction are led, when they form

opinions of slavery from what is permitted to meet their eyes and ears, while honoured guests in the islands.

The distant date of such testimony did not allow me to leave it unnoticed, as it is still cited by some of the colonial opponents to whom I had to reply. In fact, they have none more recent, of the same high character, to cite. But its age also constitutes its pre-eminent value, in the use to which I now apply it; because, in reference to the period at which that evidence was given, there is no longer any doubt or denial of facts, which prove that these much respected witnesses were, in the favourable accounts they gave of slavery, very widely deceived.

Should your Majesty have the condescension to read what I have written on this subject, from the twentieth to the forty-sixth page of this volume, you will find that the defence now maintained on the part of the sugar colonies, is quite inconsistent with that which their agents formerly called those gallant officers and others to support; and amounts, in effect, to a repudiation of their honest but erroneous testimony.

The assemblies, and the planters at large, have been driven by subsequent investigations, and by the admissions of writers of their own party, to confess that the state of slavery at that period was quite indefensible; and what they now desire us to believe, on the faith of evidence taken by themselves in the colonies, and on the assertions of their accredited public apologists, is that the case has since been altered, or rather reversed. Instead of still

maintaining that the slaves, at the era of the parliamentary examinations, were treated with the utmost tenderness and liberality, as their witnesses then asserted, they admit, in effect, that the treatment was then as negligent, sordid, and severe, as abolitionists alleged. They acknowledge that cruelties in punishment were then frequent, and that the laws afforded no protection against them; that the preservation of their numbers by native increase, was no object of solicitude with their masters; and that the frightful decrease in population was, in a great measure, imputable to avaricious oppression and neglect. One eminent planter and colonial apologist, Dr. Collins, has since expressly admitted, that insurrection and famine, combined with severe labour, were very frequent causes of mortality among the plantation slaves, speaking of the same times in which the respectable witnesses I have alluded to, thought their labour remarkably light, and their sustenance abundant.

Some of the present admissions, on the highest colonial authority, bring the condemnation of the former case much further down. They date the very commencement of humanity in the treatment of slaves, and care of their preservation, from the abolition of the slave trade in 1807; and ascribe it to the influence of that measure on the minds of the masters.

If the new defence, however inconsistent with the old, were founded in truth; if the alleged subsequent improvements were real, and such as to satisfy, in a reasonable degree, the demands of justice and humanity, these remarks would be less worthy of your

Majesty's attention. But I have shown in this work, that the policy of casting back on past times, all that is most reproachful in the system, and taking credit thereby for alleged reformations, is by no means new; and that the present iteration of it has no just claim to confidence.

Could I hope that my delineation of slavery throughout, as contained in the present and former volume, would be honoured with a perusal by your Majesty, I should not doubt that the result would be a conviction in your royal mind, that the alleged improvements are, for the most part, fictitious or illusory. In respect, at least, of the grand economical oppressions of excessive labour, and inadequate maintenance, I have shown that the case is not materially altered, by what, I trust, will be found irrefragable proofs. If not, it must be because, not merely the enemies of the system, but its friends, apologists, and administrators, are supposed to have concurred in defaming it; for I have relied upon the evidence on the colonial side alone.

I humbly submit, on the whole, to your Majesty's judgment, that the state of slavery in the colonies, which I have delineated, both in point of law and practice, is not more inconsistent with the character of that free and happy constitution over which your Majesty has the happiness and glory to preside, than repugnant to the clearest dictates of religion, justice, and humanity; and such as ought no longer to be maintained or tolerated within your Majesty's dominions.

That your Majesty's life may be prolonged, with

every public and private blessing, long after the aged subject, who has now the honour to address you, shall be called to his account before the King of Kings, and that among the felicities and glories of your reign, may be our deliverance from the guilt and reproach of colonial slavery, is the ardent wish and prayer of

Sire,

Your Majesty's faithful and devoted

Servant and Subject

JAMES STEPHEN.

PREFACE.

THE hope of engaging at this critical and arduous juncture of political affairs, so large a portion of the time of British statesmen and legislators, as would be necessary for the perusal of the work I now offer to the public, may seem idle and presumptuous; yet for their use chiefly it has been composed.

Why it was not sooner finished and published, is partly explained in my introductory chapter; and if the apologies there made are not thought sufficient, let me here claim the indulgence due to the infirmities of age. The composition of a work like this becomes laborious, in proportion as memory, in the promptness of its suggestions, declines; and my sight also having, during the last two or three years, been greatly impaired, the task of keeping up, in my reading, with the rapid growth of information and discussion in a voluminous public controversy, has been more than, consistently with official and private duties, I could easily sustain.

The best evidence of my own sincere persuasion, that such a work was wanted, is that I have at all, though feebly and tardily, surmounted those impedi-

ments, by a great sacrifice of personal ease, the enjoyment which age is most covetous of, and finds it hardest to relinquish.

The peculiar plan of my work is that, which in my own view constitutes its chief, or whole, importance; and gives me the hope of its being useful to the great cause that I advocate, with enlightened and influential minds.

Of all the difficulties with which public men, personally strangers to the West India colonies, are embarrassed by the anti-slavery question, the greatest, I believe, is that of ascertaining on what premises of fact they can safely rely; and there can be no possible means of removing this difficulty so effectual as the singular plan which I have adopted, that of reasoning wholly *ex concessis*, and establishing every fact that I adduce by the evidence of my opponents alone.

A work constructed on such principles, neither asks nor needs any confidence in its author. It might have been published anonymously, without impairing its effect: except that it would have been less likely to obtain public attention, on a subject which has not the attraction of novelty; and on which those who read, not for entertainment merely, but instruction, too generally, though very erroneously, suppose they have nothing still to learn.

This consideration, however, is of great and fearful importance to the cause of the unfortunate slaves. Though the inherent force of truth has, at length, made its way through all the entrenchments of controversial falsehood, and nothing is wanting to insure

the victory of humanity and justice, but to turn the artillery of the adverse host upon themselves; though a watchful advocate of reformation now sees his way to full success, in a review of the evidence opposed to him; one formidable obstacle intervenes: —it is the satiety of his audience:—it is the difficulty of being heard.

To lessen, if possible, this disadvantage, I have taken a course not very pleasant to a man who loves peace, and sincerely dislikes publicity, that of affixing my name to the work; for it is one fair claim to attention, that the author is known to be well acquainted with his subject; and when I pledge myself, as I here confidently do, that the views I have now to open on the state of colonial slavery are, in great measure, new to the public,—new, at least, in their systematic combination, and the strong species of demonstration with which they are accompanied; and new, also, as to the details of the general oppressions they describe, many, perhaps, from curiosity, if not from higher motives, will take the trouble to satisfy themselves whether that pledge, from a man well versed in the long-depending controversy, has been forfeited or redeemed.

But will there not be a counterpoise to this benefit, in adverse prepossessions, which the author's name may excite? Not, I humbly hope, with men of intelligence and penetration; for though I ask no confidence, I am unconscious of any thing that can fairly expose me to suspicion or distrust.

I have, indeed, been long and loudly railed against, as an enemy of the sugar colonies, and a

man intent on their destruction; but public men well know, from experience, how to estimate party-spirited invectives like these. They mean only that my views of the sources of prosperity and mischief to the planters, are, and always have been, diametrically opposite to their own; that I was an early and determined enemy to the slave-trade, which they long held vital to their welfare; and, an enemy not less determined, of that interior system which, in their eyes, is prosperity and safety, but, in mine, perennial calamity, and closely impending ruin. They now, virtually admit that I was their friend, rather than their enemy, in the former case; and, perhaps, will one day do me the same justice in the other.

Against some anonymous charges, less vague, arraigning my motives and sincerity, I have already defended myself before the public;* and my antagonists have not hazarded a reply.

There is one imputation, indeed, which, though not ill calculated, I fear, to enlist strong prejudices against any advocate of a cause like this, with no small part of the community, I cannot desire to contradict; but rather wish, that when fairly interpreted, it were true to a greater extent than it really is. I mean the charge, mixed up with almost every invective of my colonial enemies, that I am actuated in these labours by such a zeal for Christian doctrines and principles, as they call enthusiasm and fanaticism; or that I am a character, their familiar

* See the Preface to my former volume.

name for which I will not quote, because it is a most irreverent, not to say impious use, for derisive purposes, of a scriptural term, appropriated to the venerated first founders of our faith.

Far be it from me to disclaim, as motives of my zeal in this great cause, the fear of God, and a sense of Christian duty; but I will not needlessly leave to my opponents the benefit of those prejudices to which they craftily appeal; and, therefore, will not scruple to say, that if my hostility to West India slavery were truly imputable to zeal for the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, the effect must have preceded its cause.

When I first knew the West Indies, I was a very young man; and not less ignorant and regardless of Christianity, or of all, at least, that exclusively belongs to it, than young men in my own sphere of life then too generally were. I had early imbibed such theological opinions as are commonly called liberal; and though religion was not wholly left out of my scheme, either in theory or practice, it was a religion in which not only Christians of the lowest standard, but enlightened heathens, might have concurred; nor can any man be more disposed than I then was to despise, as narrow-mindedness and bigotry, those views which I am now supposed, whether justly or not, to entertain. Yet I can truly say, and appeal to my known conduct in proof of it, that I no sooner personally knew what negro slavery is, in its odious practice and effects, than I conceived and avowed for it all the detestation that I at this moment feel, regarded it as the greatest evil that

ever afflicted suffering humanity, and the most opprobrious crime of my country; and devoted my future life, as far as was immediately possible, to that great African cause, in which I have continued to labour for no less than forty-seven years.

It is not true, then, that zeal for Christianity, or what my opponents call enthusiasm in religion, made me an enemy to slavery. It would be much nearer the truth, for certain reasons, to say that this enmity made me a Christian. But I know of no scheme of religion or morals, Christian or Pagan, on which the slavery of the sugar colonies, when truly delineated, can admit of justification or excuse.

A fear has sometimes occurred to me while writing on these subjects for the public, and especially when noticing the corrupting effects of familiarity and contact with the harsh system, in the minds of those who have long resided in the colonies, that I might seem to arrogate to myself some native superiority to others, in having, during a residence there of eleven years, escaped that moral contagion. Let me here, therefore, disclaim as I sincerely can, any such vain opinion. Most unaffectedly do I confess my belief, that had it not pleased a gracious providence to guard me there by singular means from the general influence, I should, like others, have soon reconciled myself to the becoming an owner of slaves, next, in consequence, to the exercise of that odious discipline by which they are governed, and finally, perhaps, to the becoming a planter, and to all the abuses of the harsh relation which I have delineated in the present work. That I escaped that ordinary progress was

chiefly owing to a resolution formed immediately after my first arrival in the West Indies, and inflexibly adhered to during my stay there, never to be the owner of a slave. The calumnies of colonial enemies obliged me, self-defensively, to notice this peculiarity, in the preface to my former volume,* and no opponent, to my knowledge, has since attempted to contradict the facts there stated. But let me now add to them, if not from candour and justice to others, who have, on their emigration to lands of slavery, guarded themselves by no such resolution, at least in humble gratitude to an all-directing Providence, an incident that led me happily to form it.

Like other strangers from Europe, I should probably have seen and heard little of the state and treatment of slaves to disgust or alarm me, till too late to adopt that precaution, but for the coincidence of various circumstances apparently fortuitous (by a Christian nothing should be strictly deemed such), which gave me, immediately after my first arrival, a view of the system more impressive and revolting than can be easily described; and taught me more in a day, of its real character and effects, than those who do not go out to reside on plantations, are likely to learn for years, or till habit has made the discovery useless to them. Though destined to St. Christopher, I was led, by an acquaintance accidentally formed, to take my passage in a ship that had previously to touch at Barbadoes, an island four degrees of latitude out of my way, to land some passengers

* See p. 51 to 54.

and stores there, where we arrived, after an accident that detained us long in the Downs, in December, 1783.

A letter from a London merchant to his correspondent at Bridgetown, the chief port of the island, secured to me the hospitable reception from him — which strangers usually meet in that part of the world; and the next day I met a large party at his house, that had been invited to dine with me there.

The principal topic of conversation at table, was the approaching trial of four plantation slaves, charged with the murder of a gentleman of the medical profession, for which they were to be tried the next day; and my attention was the more excited to the subject, by the discovery that there were among the gentlemen in company some who strongly doubted the guilt of the prisoners, that the case was involved in very mysterious circumstances, and that public suspicion glanced at a gentleman of the island, who had not however been prosecuted, or publicly charged with the offence.

I learned, in answer to questions that curiosity prompted me to put to one or more of the gentlemen near me, what the grounds of that suspicion were; but I will not state them here; because, though forty-seven years have since elapsed, I cannot be sure that the indication they might furnish of the individual suspected, to surviving members of the same society, would not be injurious to him, if still in life; or to the feelings of his relations and friends if he is no more. I will only say, that the suspicious circumstances

appeared to me pretty strong; and that one of them was a certain interest which he was understood to have in the fatal event; whereas the negroes, if guilty, must have committed what in the West Indies is a crime very rarely heard of, the murder of a white man; and without any apparent motive.

My curiosity naturally inspired a wish to be present at the trial, not only from these circumstances of the case, but because I was too truly told that slaves were tried for their offences in a very different way from that which I nad been accustomed to witness on the trial of criminals in England; and my kind entertainer, therefore, was induced to accompany me to the court at its sitting the next morning.

Very soon and painfully did I perceive how shocking a contrast there was between the proceedings of a slave court, and the humanity of our criminal tribunals.

The court, consisting of a bench of justices of the peace, five I think in number, without a jury, was no sooner constituted, than the four black prisoners were placed at the bar; and as they were first common field negroes I had seen, their filthy and scanty garbs would have moved my pity, if it had not been more strongly excited by the pain they were visibly suffering from tight ligatures of cord round their crossed wrists, which supplied the place of hand-cuffs. I noticed it to my companion, and said, surely they will be put at bodily ease during their trial; but he replied it was not customary. As there was no indictment, or other express charge, and consequently

no arraignment, they had not to hold up their hands; and remained bound in the same painful way while I remained a spectator.

But the first proceeding of the bench, changed the sensation of pity in my breast, into honest indignation. It was the production and reading by the chairman of a letter received by him from a gentleman, who was owner of two of the prisoners, and who had been written to with an enquiry, whether he would choose to employ a lawyer in the defence of his slaves; and the answer was that he declined to do so, adding as his reason, "*God forbid that he* "*should wish in such a case to screen the guilty from* "*punishment.*" To the best of my recollection these were the very words: I am sure such was the exact import of the letter.

I turned with a look of astonishment to my conductor; but before I could whisper my feelings, they were diverted from the master to the bench, for to my astonishment the chairman applauded the letter, as honourable to the writer; and the other magistrates concurred in his eulogy.

Strangely misplaced though I felt it to be, and shocked though I was at such a cruel prejudication of the unfortunate prisoners by their natural protector, I supposed that the commendation rested on his disinterestedness, in being willing to sacrifice his property in their bodies, without opposition to the demands of public justice; for I did not then know of the laws noticed in my first volume, p. 322 to 328, which entitle a master, on the conviction and execu-

tion of his slave, to be paid for his loss of property out of the public purse. The lawyers' fees in consequence would have been a profitless expense.

Not only was there no written charge, but no opening of the case, on the part of the prosecution. The prisoners had to learn it as I did, only from the evidence adduced; the uncontroverted part of which was briefly as follows.

The deceased had been visiting a certain estate in his usual routine as its medical attendant; and after seeing the patients, mounted his horse, to return to his residence in town. A negro of the estate the same morning brought in the horse with the saddle and bridle on, saying that he had found it grazing in one of the cane pieces; and the manager thereupon ordered it to be put into the stable; but did not send till the next day to give information of the occurrence at the doctor's house; supposing, as he alleged, that the horse by some accident had got away from him, and would be sent for. The deceased however never returned to his home; and an alarm naturally arising, he was enquired for at the estates he had visited; and after consequent searches, the body was found in a cane piece not far from the house he had last visited, with contusions on the head, such as a fall from his horse could not have occasioned, and which were the apparent cause of his death.

So far there was nothing to affect either of the prisoners; except that one of them, a very old negro, was the man who brought in the horse; and though this was regarded as a leading circumstance of sus-

picion against him, it seemed to me of a directly opposite tendency.

But a negro girl, or *wench*, as she was called in the ordinary style of the slave colonies, a deformed creature, apparently about fifteen years old, was next called, as the only witness who could bring the offence home, by positive testimony, to the prisoners.

Before she was examined, she was addressed by the chairman in a way that carried my surprise and indignation to the utmost pitch. She was admonished in the most alarming terms, to beware not to conceal any thing that made against the prisoners; and told that if she did, she would involve herself in their crime, and its punishment. No caution whatever was given as to any sin or danger on the opposite side. Every word implied a premature conviction in the mind of the court, that the prisoners were certainly guilty, and that she would be probably disbelieved and punished if she said any thing tending to acquit them. Terror was strongly depicted in her countenance during this address; and I felt at the moment that had I been a juryman to try the prisoners on her evidence, after such an exhortation, nothing she might testify against them would weigh a feather in my verdict.

As the negro dialect was new to me, I should not have been able clearly to understand her testimony in many parts of it, without the assistance of my companion, who kindly whispered the interpretations that I asked for; but her story in substance was, that the deceased rode up to the negro houses of a plantation she belonged to, for shelter against a

shower of rain; that he alighted, and gave his horse to one of the prisoners to hold; and that thereupon he and the other three, the only persons present except herself, fell upon him with sticks, knocked him down, and beat him to death; and afterwards carried his body to the cane piece in which it was found.

No provocation, or other motive, was assigned by her, and her evidence, independently of the terror that had been impressed upon her, would have appeared to me, from its matter, and the manner in which it was given, wholly unworthy of credit. The countenances and gesticulations of all the unfortunate men during her examination, impressed me with a strong persuasion of their innocence. Never were the workings of nature more clearly imitated by the most expert actor on any stage, if her whole narrative did not fill them with astonishment; and excite in them all the indignation that belongs to injured innocence. I expressed that feeling strongly to my conductor; and he dissented only by observing that negroes in general were masters of dissimulation; or something to that effect.

At the conclusion of her evidence, he reminded me that it was time to go, as we had to meet a party at dinner, and I was not sorry to quit the scene, for besides the bodily sufferings, to which the foul air of a crowded court in that hot atmosphere subjected me, I was nearly overpowered by disgust and indignation at what I had seen and heard.

Here, therefore, I must cease to narrate the case from my own direct knowledge. But the sequel was

well supplied to me by evidence beyond suspicion. The same day I heard of what further passed on the trial, from persons who had staid in court to the end of it. No further evidence had fortified that of the negro *wench* in any material point. On the strength of her testimony alone, the magistrates had convicted all the prisoners of murder.

I asked my host anxiously "do you think they will be hanged?" and great was my horror at the answer, when explained to me. He supposed that the governor would be applied to for an "*exemplary death.*" What, I asked, was meant by that? "*burning alive* perhaps, or *gibbeting*," was the reply. On enquiring what was the meaning of the latter term, it was explained to me to be hanging them up alive on a gibbet, in an iron cage or hoops, and leaving them to perish by hunger, thirst, and the other miseries of that situation.

"And by what law are such cruelties perpetrated within the British dominions?" He could not tell; but it was understood the governor had a power to order such execution of slaves in extraordinary cases. "And did you ever know an instance of this *gibbet-*
"*ing?*" "Yes, I remember one; but it was a long "time ago. I was then a boy; and can remember "that after the man had hung many days (he was "above a week in dying), I and other boys threw "up" (I forget whether he said pieces of bread or fruit), "to the cage, which the poor wretch tried to "catch with his mouth through the bars."

I should hardly venture to mention this fact, if like cruelties had not been narrated by Mr. Bryan

Edwards and others; and if an execution precisely of the same kind, and with a death as lingering, had not notoriously taken place at Dominica, by order of the then governor, while I was resident in the Leeward Islands. Balla, the insurgent chief, was gibbetted, close to the chief Town of Roseau; and being there a year or more after, I heard a particular account of it, exactly corresponding with that of my Barbadoes host, from several respectable gentlemen who disapproved of the act; but though enemies of the governor (who was then the object of violent popular clamour), candidly admitted that he had been led to it by a pretty general wish of the community.*

I left Barbadoes immediately after the trial, but heard soon after the sequel of the tragedy, from several gentlemen who came from that Island to St. Christopher. The court applied to the Governor, a planter of the Island, and one who afterwards gave a very favourable account of the general humanity of his brethren, before the privy council, for an *exemplary death*; and he ordered that the four convicts should be burnt alive.

But what perhaps will be thought the most singular part of the case, remains to be told;

The owner of two of the slaves, the same I believe, who so *laudably* refused to employ a lawyer for them, on hearing of the evidence on which they had been convicted, in respect of time and place, was able to establish a clear *alibi* in their favor, to the satisfaction

* See my first vol. p. 309, and the cases there noticed.

of the magistrates who had tried them; in consequence of which they were pardoned. But however incredible it may appear, the two other unfortunate men, convicted on the very same evidence, nevertheless underwent the cruel fate to which they were sentenced. They were literally burnt alive at Bridgetown.

Among the persons there at the time, whose information, within a short time after, confirmed to me these concluding particulars, was the late Charles Sturt, Esq. afterwards member of parliament for Bridport. He was then Lieutenant of the Falcon Sloop of War, which came down soon after the execution, from Barbadoes to St. Christopher; and being a friend of mine, he answered my enquiries on the subject very freely; confirming that extraordinary fact which I had found it difficult to believe, the ground on which two of the prisoners had been spared, and which nevertheless had not saved the others from a dreadful death. "I had not," he added, "the "heart to witness the execution myself; but several "of our officers and people did; and the account of "it they gave when they returned on board, made "me shudder. You may remember" said he, "the "little old man," (I did so, and shall never forget him. At this moment, his spare form and wrinkled visage, agitated with wonder and indignation while the girl was giving her evidence, are before me), in "his tortures he drew the iron stake to which he was "fastened from the ground, and had nearly got away "from the fire; but they drove the stake into the

" ground again, and applied more fuel. Both were " literally roasted to death."

Such was the case which gave me my first right views of negro slavery in the sugar colonies, almost as soon as I reached their shores.

My previous impressions on the subject, were not less erroneous than those which strangely yet prevail with too many in the middle and upper classes of this country. An uncle, and an elder brother of mine, had reconciled themselves to the practical system; and the latter, a man of as much native benignity as I have ever known, was then engaged in it as a planter. My fellow-passengers, all West Indians, had kind and pleasing manners; and they had all, as usual, in like cases, taken pains with me to extenuate that revolting incident of the state, which the uninformed are led to believe is its only hardship, — liability to be whipped, by the mandate of a private master. They, indeed, somewhat counteracted, in this respect, their own purpose; by insisting much upon, and magnifying, the faults of the slaves, and their general ignorance and stupidity, as apologies for a discipline without which it was impossible to govern them: for I had reflection enough to apprehend that such adverse and contemptuous views of them in the minds of their masters, were not unlikely to be both the effects, and causes, of severity in their treatment. On the whole, however, I was not indisposed to believe, that an institution, to which so many of my humane countrymen, and some of my near relations and friends, had recon-

ciled themselves, was as lenient, generally, in practice, as the case would well allow.

I bless God, that by the singular means here recorded, I was kept from adding to such ordinary sources of prejudice, the self-love and self delusion, by which a man is easily reconciled to bad practices, when his own immediate interests, or his own credit, plead for their indulgence and defence; and more especially, when habit has insensibly lowered in his mind, that moral standard by which he forms his judgment.

The case I have mentioned was every way calculated to rescue me at the outset, from delusion. As a lawyer, I could not but be deeply impressed with the shocking contrast it presented to the impartial and humane administration of British justice, and its reversal of every principle that I had been taught to reverence, by writers on general jurisprudence. And how much were my indignant feelings augmented, when I learned, from an enquiry which it suggested, that white men in the same island, were not only exempt from all such barbarous departures from the laws of England; but for the wilful murder of a slave, were liable only to a fine of fifteen pounds.*

It gave me incidentally, also, a full proof how greatly the feelings of slave-masters in general, were indurated by the system they administered;

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* See the passages in my former volume, before referred to, and the whole of the sixth section of its fifth chapter, as to the servile criminal code.

for the case, naturally, was mentioned by me with reprobation, after my arrival in St. Christopher, to persons of both sexes, whom I met with there; and though the cruel mode of execution, was condemned by them, or undefended against my censures, I could easily perceive, that with few exceptions, their feelings on the subject were by no means responsive to my own. And as to the mode of trial, and conduct of the court, they were little, if at all, disposed to concur in my strictures; but rather to extenuate or defend such proceedings, which I soon found were in unison with those in use among themselves, on the score of the bad characters of slaves in general, and the difficulty of extorting truth from them, when under examination, as to their own crimes, or those of their brethren.

I was indebted, in short, to this early and impressive view of slavery, and the cruel prejudices inspired by it, for the resolution that I immediately formed, and declared, never to become the owner of a slave; and if I have contributed in any degree to the abolition of the slave trade, or shall ever have the happiness to promote the deliverance of its much injured victims in our colonies, the blood that was cruelly shed at Bridgetown, forty-seven years ago, was not shed in vain.

I trust that the statement of this case on my own unsupported authority, will not be thought a departure from the rule which I stand pledged to adhere to in the body of this work. I shall found no argument or general observation upon it; nor is it referable to any part of the system that I have here to

delineate. Neither can it be my aim to insinuate, that like cruel executions are still in use; for I freely avow my belief of the contrary, and that in most, if not all the colonies, where they had been deemed legal, they are now prohibited by positive law.

As to the general spirit of public injustice and inhumanity towards slaves, which the case exemplifies, *this*, had a retrospective view of it been my object, might have been shewn to have prevailed in the same island, at a much more recent period I might have cited, for instance, those shocking cases in the official correspondence of Lord Seaford, which were printed by parliament; and the long-continued resistance of the colony of Barbadoes, when solicited by His Majesty's government to protect their slaves from wilful murder, by annexing to the crime its proper punishment, instead of a fine of fifteen pounds; though several atrocious cases of slave murder had then recently shown the barbarous effects of such impunity.

I see no objection, therefore, to my prefixing to my work this personal narrative, though supported by my own testimony alone, as tending to reconcile without a boast, my own early and lasting antipathy to negro slavery, with that long exposure to its local influences, by which many better men have been reconciled to it, at the expence of their native feelings.

After all, the plan of my present work is such, I repeat, as to make the credit of its author, or the sources of his anti-slavery feelings, of little or no importance. I need, and I desire, no confidence in

the writer; but only in the admissions of those by whom his general views and practical objects are opposed.

There is one probable objection to my labours, against which it may be important to guard. In pleading the case of the unfortunate slaves, I may be supposed *agere actum;* needlessly to advocate a reformation already resolved upon, and in progress; and on the completion of which His Majesty's present government is sufficiently intent. But it has been a leading object of my work to prove, that no measures hitherto taken, or known to be in contemplation, either for terminating slavery, or mitigating its enormous evils, have any real tendency to promote those very important and necessary ends.

So clear and demonstrable is this truth, that were it in my power to cancel all that has been done for carrying into effect the resolutions of May 1823, I should not hesitate to do so; at least if I could restore to the public mind that simplicity of conception and feeling on the subject, which then prevailed.

The duty of delivering the country from the guilt and shame of slavery, has been solemnly recognized by the government and legislature; but the means resolved upon were utterly inadequate in their plan; and in their feeble and vacillating application, have proved worse than useless. They have embarrassed and retarded, rather than advanced, the work of real reformation. They have confirmed and strengthened the resistance of its enemies; and weakened and divided its friends. For one dispute on the general principle, a hundred have been substituted on the

practical details; and while objects too minute to be worth contending for, or of no real value at all, have given birth to complex and voluminous discussions, distracting the attention, both of the government and the public; the worst, the most destructive, and most general, of the oppressions under which the poor slaves are daily groaning and perishing, are left unremedied, unattended to, and almost forgot.

It is to demonstrate the reality, and the enormity of these general and standing oppressions, that I now address myself to the public. It is to prove what I have always maintained, that a merciless excess of forced labour, exacted by means as merciless, and its ordinary concomitants, badness and scantiness of food, are the main evils, the former especially, by which the field negroes on sugar plantations are afflicted, worn down, and destroyed; that these economical oppressions. give birth and tenacity to all the rest; and that till these are corrected, all other means for improving the condition of the slaves physically, intellectually, or morally, or for preserving their declining race even from destruction, will be found perfectly vain and useless.

These propositions certainly are not new; and as to the existence of such oppressions, they have been so often admitted, that a man who has read much of the public evidence and controversial pieces, though only the colonial side, cannot possibly entertain a doubt of their frequent occurrence. The question with him can only be as to their degree, and their general prevalence.

But with a large part of the British public, it will

be matter of painful novelty to find to what a truly enormous extent, these avaricious excesses have been carried, and still prevail; not in particular cases merely, but in general and ordinary practice; and with what strict demonstration these can be proved to be the sources of almost every other species of oppression that humanity has to lament, in the treatment of plantation slaves.

But how to remedy these baneful evils, while slavery exists, is a difficult problem indeed; and I can suggest no practical solution of it, that would not be attended with difficulties as great, and opposed by the planters as pertinaciously, as the dissolution of the state itself. If any such remedy can be discovered by others, my labours may assist their researches; as the first step towards the cure of what is morbid in the natural or civil body, is the ascertainment of the nature and extent of the disease.

But the result, in my mind, of long experience and anxious reflection, aided by a familiar acquaintance with the calamitous case, during great part of a long life, is, that the stern relation of master and slave admits of no effectual modification by law; that to limit its extent or duration, is the only real palliative of its enormous mischiefs, and its abolition their only cure.

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* My manuscript has been sent to press in different portions and at different times, as I progressively was able to prepare it, during nearly a year past; which it may be necessary to observe, in order to avoid the appearance of anachronisms, in the notice of different publications, as having just appeared, or met my eye, at certain points of my progress.

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THE STATE CALLED

SLAVERY,

IN THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES,

DELINEATED AND CONSIDERED.

BOOK II.

DELINEATION OF THE STATE IN ITS ORDINARY PRACTICAL NATURE AND EFFECTS.

CHAPTER I.

REASONS FOR RESUMING THIS WORK; DEFENCE OF THE FIRST, AND PLAN OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE two grand divisions of this work proposed at the outset, were, first, a delineation of slavery in a theoretic view, as a legal institution; and secondly, a delineation of the state in respect of its practical nature and effects. The former part of my task has been performed; the latter has been long retarded, and still remains to be accomplished.

While many readers of my former volume have expressed some impatience of desire for the appearance of the present; others, perhaps, have thought that this part of my plan might be conveniently and properly laid aside; considering how much the practice of slavery has, during the last five years, been discussed before the public by other writers, whose principles are in accordance with my own.—To a large part of the community, it may seem that the great objects of my labours, the mitigation and gradual abolition of slavery, are virtually at-

tained or secured; and that the Parliamentary resolutions of May, 1823, with the consequent measures of Government, have made this sequel of my work useless, at least, if not even adverse to my purpose.

That such views have been entertained by many, even among the sincere friends of the anti-slavery cause, I well know and lament; and have reason to fear that they may still widely prevail; for, though those measures have been nearly fruitless in all the colonies, and in some of them the solicitations of the Crown, and the voice of Parliament have been treated with the utmost contempt and defiance by the Assemblies; their agents and partizans in this country have played a far more politic game, labouring indefatigably to persuade the British Public that opposition in language has been accompanied, in some measure at least, with practical compliance; that the Planters and Assemblies, like the son in the parable, while answering to the parental command "I go not," have actually gone into the field: that much has been already done, and that patience on our part, alone is wanting to make their obedience entire.

In my last publication, "*England enslaved by her own Slave Colonies,*" I endeavored to shew the erroneousness and the fatal tendency of such opinions; but not, I fear, with sufficient general effect on the public mind; and if any of the real friends of reformation still indulge a false security, and condemn as needless, further attempts to excite, on the right side, the feeling of the British people, one effort only remains by which I can hope to disabuse them; the laborious and painful one, which again employs my pen. If any thing can effectually serve to dispel the delusions that prevail, and satisfy reasoning minds that slavery has not been, nor without parliamentary legislation ever will be, reformed, it is such means as I have long since engaged to supply; a development and demonstration of the true practical nature and fixed principles of the system, not in its particular, but general administration, deduced exclusively from the evidence of those by whom it is defended and maintained.

In proposing remedies for the inveterate, deeply seated, and deadly disease of colonial slavery, I have to encounter difficulties like those of a faithful well-informed physician,

whose patient has been long in the hands of deluded friends, and self-interested crafty practitioners; both adverse, though on different views, to the only possible means of cure. The former, from groundless apprehensions of danger in the right and only effectual course, are trusting to wretched palliatives, which are of no real use even in the way of mitigation, while the latter are applying them, and alleging good effects from their inchoate use, merely to support their own credit, and keep the patient longer in their own mercenary hands. The physician is aware, that to dispel the delusion will be not only a difficult, but a thankless and invidious office; but sees there is no other expedient to prevent a fatal termination. To obtain the use of truly efficacious means, he must convince the too confident friends of the vanity of their present hopes, and the fallacy of the pretended improvements, by exposing to them, however alarmingly, the inveterate constitutional causes, the still subsisting malignity, and extreme danger of the case.

But though the present state of the Anti-slavery cause, unhappily, is not such as to absolve me from my promised task, much has been done by enlightened coadjutors that may well justify a great contraction of my plan. I refer particularly to the work called "NEGRO SLAVERY," to the writings of THE REVEREND MR. BICKILL, and MR. COOPER, and above all, to those very valuable tracts, THE ANTI-SLAVERY MONTHLY REPORTS. They contain, collectively, such copious information as to the practice of Slavery in the Sugar Colonies, that had the writers adopted my own plan of delineating Slavery systematically, and in its ordinary character, and relying only on the evidence of our opponents, they would have left me little, if any thing, to add; but though those well-informed writers have not thought it necessary to use such abstinence in respect of evidence (which certainly they were no wise bound to do), enough has been proved by them from irrefragable authority, and even out of the mouths of the planters themselves, to establish many of the abuses that I meant to develop; and to refute decisively most of the idle pretences of improvements which I should otherwise have had to repel.

I shall be content to leave in their hands all that relates to the shocking general neglect of intellectual, moral, and religious instruction; to the profanation of the Sabbath; to the discouragement of marriage; to the licentious and indecent treatment of females; and to excesses and barbarities in punishment; with the non-execution and perversion of those laws which profess to restrain such abuses. I shall abstain also from adding to their strictures, or to my own in my former works, on the hardships under which the slaves labour, in point of law and practice, from their liability to be sold apart from their families, the rejection of their evidence, the impediments to their acquisition of freedom, and its insecurity when obtained.

What then, it may possibly be asked, after such a catalogue of exclusions, are to be the subjects of my delineation and proof? "Surely it may be thought, most of, if not all, the evils of slavery must be comprised in this enumeration."

Would to heaven that the fact were so! — The state, though bad enough, would be merciful and mild, compared with what it really is. It would be a case sufficiently lamentable and opprobrious; but not such as has harrowed up my soul with unavailing sympathy from youth to age; and now urges me to renew my labours, after more than three score and eleven years have chilled my human hopes, benumbed my faculties, and left me no selfish good beneath the sun, so precious as repose and peace.

Numerous and cruel though the oppressions are by which the poor negroes are degraded, tormented, and destroyed, there are two which I have always regarded and publicly denounced as by far the worst; not only because the most general, and the most afflictive, but because they give birth and virulence and tenacity, to almost all the rest. I mean *the truly enormous amount of labour to which the field negroes, or ordinary plantation slaves, are coerced; and the almost incredible degree of parsimony with which they are maintained.* Most of the other sufferings incident to their hapless state are casual and temporary; but these are certain and perennial; and though mitigated in a small degree under the

more liberal of their owners, are, to a great and grievous extent, their universal lot.

Such oppressions are also the least likely to meet with any private restraint or correction. Abuses, the effects of anger, revenge, or other malignant passions, in a manager, overseer, or other subordinate master, might be expected to be much restrained or punished by the owner's authority, if brought to his knowledge; for in such cases the interests of proprietors and of slaves are clearly on the same side. But oppressions of a gainful or economical kind, are perpetrated for the owner's emolument; and the present sacrifices necessary to their correction are what few sugar planters are able if willing to make. Such oppressions also, when established by general usage, become, from the effects of commercial competition, hardly capable of correction, without ruinous consequences to individuals, except by the regulations of a general and compulsory law.

The pre-eminence of evil in these economical branches of oppression will more fully appear, when it shall be shewn what cruel effects they produce, and how large a portion of the other ordinary severities of the system are their natural, and, in great measure, inseparable attendants. Though the ordinary discipline of the plantations is odious and inhuman in its nature, the inflictions of the *vindictive*, when compared with those of the *coercive* whip, are small in their general amount; and the former, too, are, for the most part, the penalties of defaults to which excess of labour and insufficiency of aliment give rise. Of every hundred stripes, that are given on a sugar plantation, exclusive of the drivers' coercive process, ninety or more are inflicted for absence from the field at the appointed time, or the short performance of a solitary task; and that these delinquencies are much more often the effects of fatigue and inanition than any other cause, I shall abundantly prove, out of the mouths of the planters themselves.

How, indeed, can these consequences be doubted? If, under a system of forced labour, the work imposed is excessive, and the quantum of food inadequate, it is manifest that in proportion to the degree of those economical oppres-

sions, must be the severity of the discipline by which they are imposed. The resistance of nature can be no otherwise overcome. If you would drive your tired post horses another stage, you must not restrain your driver from the free use of his whip; still less if they have been also stinted in their food.

That labour, so excessive and continuous as to leave the common field negro neither spirits nor time for any voluntary efforts, must preclude his intellectual and religious improvement, his acquisition of property, and whatever else we comprise in the idea of civilization, is equally clear. In short, this species of oppression, when its cruel extent is proved, will be plainly seen to be incompatible with all real improvements in the physical condition of the slaves; and still more with such advances in the intellectual and moral scale, as are held (whether rightly or not, I will not in this place enquire) to be necessary preparatives for the termination of their bondage.

For these reasons, then, while I rely upon the writings of my fellow-labourers, as having exonerated me from a large part of the task that I undertook, I feel the engagement still binding, and the duty imperative, to delineate the general practice of the sugar colonies, in regard to those most important articles of oppression, the extreme degree of forced labour imposed upon plantation slaves, and the great inadequacy of maintenance given in return.

Let me not be understood to mean, that my humane and respected coadjutors have wholly neglected those most interesting topics. Enough has been said by them to shew that their views in these respects are in general like my own; though the excess of labour has not, in my judgment, had that prominence among the abuses they have exposed, which its extreme cruelty and pernicious effects deserve; nor been stated with sufficient circumstantiality and precision. But the grand and general *desideratum* they have left me to supply, is a demonstration of the facts of the case from irresistible evidence; for such I may surely call testimony on the anti-slavery side, when cited from colonial tongues and colonial pens alone. And this, in respect of the ordinary amount of forced labour, is of peculiar importance; because no part of the general system has been a subject of so much assiduous

misrepresentation by our opponents; nor is there any other, I believe, in respect of which such wide misconception prevails. The quantum of daily work directly and indirectly exacted from the field negroes has been reduced by bold assertions and artful fallacies to less than one half of its actual ordinary amount; and this, by writers and witnesses whose statements have been strongly accredited to the public by their means of information, their characters, and stations in life. A hundred colonial tongues and pens have not only boldly denied the existence of this most general and notorious species of oppression, but actually claimed credit to the Planters for wonderful moderation and liberality in the use of their coercing power; assuring us that the labour of the slaves is very light; nay, lighter by far than that of the free English peasant. This latter proposition, indeed, has long been the chorus of their common song; and incredible though the fiction will be found in its nature, when examined by a reasoning mind, yet such is the effect of bold reiterated public assertion, that many, I doubt not, believe it; or regard it at least as having some approximation to the truth.

How, indeed, can I doubt this, or deem a demonstration of the true case superfluous, when I find the delusion still current even among some eminent political economists and statesmen; so as actually to form an element in their calculations, in plans for the mitigation and gradual extinction of slavery, and for the supplanting it by free labour in the cultivation of sugar estates? If they had not been grossly deceived as to the actual amount of slave labour, they could not regard it as a standard up to which, or in any sustainable competition with which, free men will or ought to work; still less could they expect the improvement of the common field negro's*

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* The distinction between the great mass of plantation slaves, those who wield the hoe and are driven, whom I call "*Field Negroes*," or "*Common Field Negroes*," and the drivers and artificers, called "*Head Negroes*," is one which I must request my readers always to bear in mind. The apologists of the system always artfully confound them together; and it is one of their great engines of deception. The latter, from the nature of their occupations, cannot be *driven*, or worked to any destructive excess. The same is more obviously the case with domestics.

condition, or the attainment of his freedom, by the fruits of supererogatory toil.

Another reason for the exclusive preference I mean to give to the topics of labour and maintenance is, that the generality of the economical oppressions they involve makes them undeniably fair characteristics, not to say essential properties, of the system at large; and will enable me more clearly in the sequel to prove the hopelessness of its reformation by West Indian legislators; or, in other words, by the planters themselves.

When cases of excessive cruelties, or other particular abuses are adduced as arguments for reformation, the standing answer is, "that the instances of such crimes which we have "been able to establish incontrovertibly before the British "public are not numerous; and that it is harsh to characterize "the general practice by a few rare instances of individual "crimes, such as are to be found in every country, and under "the best institutions."

The defence is plainly fallacious; for it infers the rarity of the crime, from that of its public detection and proof; whereas one of our most undeniable charges against the general system is, that the public detection and proof of such cruel abuses as slavery has manifestly a strong tendency to produce, are for the most part precluded both by manners and by laws. The *Lettres de Cachet* of the old French despotism, the infernal practices of the Inquisition, and every other form of tyranny on earth that has shrouded its abuses in darkness, by the terror of its power, and by withholding the means of an effectual appeal to the laws, might be defended precisely in the same way.

Besides, these apologists always take care to sink that most instructive and impressive circumstance in such adduced cases, the way in which the crime, when brought to light, is treated by the magistrates and juries, and by the popular feelings of the colony. A single conviction for a crime naturally odious might serve to indicate its great prevalence in any society, if the criminal, when convicted, not only escaped from any judicial punishment at all proportionate to his offence, and to the dangerous example of its impunity; but lost little or nothing of his former credit or popularity, and was

received in the best company as favourably as before. How much more, if the popular odium due to the offender, was transferred to those who prosecuted, and brought him to conviction.*

Nevertheless, so difficult is it for the people of this happy country to conceive what the effects of private slavery are on the feelings of the masters, and on the popular sentiments of a community, all the free members of which are habituated to that harsh relation; and so strongly does our native humanity predispose us to believe that our fellow subjects in the colonies cannot ordinarily exercise with severity the despotic powers which they possess over their helpless dependents, that the clearest refutation of these apologies does not wholly remove their effect. The oppression is believed to be rare, merely because it cannot be proved to be common.

Much are such honest prepossessions strengthened, in many minds, by friendship or intimacy with West Indians resident among us: most of whom are or have been proprietors of estates in the sugar colonies, and all of them masters of slaves. I mean, not only through the partial and untrue accounts which such gentlemen naturally give of a system, in the character of which their own credit is involved, and which they too commonly know only from the report of men under the same bias; but because nothing perhaps has been seen in their manners when amongst us, to indicate feelings less liberal and humane than our own. It is therefore concluded that a system which such men are engaged in, have perhaps personally administered, and are desirous to uphold, cannot be, in its ordinary chaacter, extremely cruel and oppressive.

Such reasoners do not consider that the stern relation of slave master, one in which the conduct of their West Indian friend has never met their notice, avowedly involves and de-

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* Those who are at all conversant with the works of anti-slavery writers need not be told that several most impressive examples of such a popular spirit in the sugar colonies have been established beyond denial. I have given one of them in Appendix, No. I. to my first volume; and in an Appendix to the present division of my work I mean to add some very recent and striking ones from decisive authorities.

mands a discipline highly repugnant to their own benevolent feelings. They do not remember either that the same person, perhaps, or gentlemen whose apparent suavity and benignity of manners when in England were not inferior to his, reconciled themselves to all the now admitted atrocities of the inhuman slave trade, though it had long existed under their eyes; and had opposed pertinaciously its abolition for nearly twenty years. They do not well estimate the powerful influence of early prejudice, habit, and example, in warping the human feelings out of their ordinary current towards a particular object; and, what is the main source of these errors, they do not know (for West Indians *here* are always careful to conceal it) that in their friend's heart, there is a wide partition between the sympathies and duties that belong to a white fellow-being and to a black one. If such considerations were not put out of the account, thinking men would no more rely on the humane treatment of negro slaves in the West Indies, from what they see of their masters in England, than on that of the convicts in the House of Correction, or the patients in a mad-house, on the score of their keeper's general manners towards those who are not in his custody, or whose interference and control he apprehends.

Still, however, this source of error, assiduously cherished as it is by the colonial party, greatly prejudices the cause of the unfortunate slaves; among the many grievous peculiarities of whose lot it is, that their cruel state is unseen in the country whose power maintains it, and that *they* are personally strangers, while *their oppressors* are companions and familiar friends, to the lawgivers, and the generous people, from whose sympathy alone they can ever obtain relief.

To shew that, in the excessive exaction of labour at least, the practice of slavery on sugar plantations is *universally* oppressive and cruel, will, I am aware, be to attack the adverse prejudices I have mentioned in their strongest intrenchments; but should I succeed in such an attempt with the public at large, as with patient and attentive readers I am sure of doing, there will be an end of all presumptions in favour of the system from the personal characters of those who are engaged in it.

While these considerations make the topics I have selected the most important, they enhance the necessity of discussing them on my own peculiar plan; for nothing short of irresistible demonstration will suffice to vanquish the powerful prejudices and, willing credulity, with which I have here to contend.

In the preliminary chapter of the first volume, the general plan of the work was opened. The most important novelty in it was that which has been already noticed; an engagement to establish every fact controverted on the part of the colonies, which I should have occasion to adduce, by the evidence alone of their own assemblies, witnesses, and partizans.* The undertaking may have seemed more bold than prudent; and was certainly quite gratuitous; for the testimony copiously given by eye-witnesses on my own side of the controversy, if believed, is decisive: and on what rational ground can confidence be generally denied to it?—I might most reasonably have claimed for such evidence at least, a great deal more credit than is due to that of our opponents; which has for the most part come from persons as deeply interested in the representations they made, as a prisoner at the bar is in his plea of not guilty; while to the credit of the many anti-slavery witnesses and writers, who have described the system from their own personal knowledge of it, no fair or specious objection can be made; unless, indeed, some of our railing antagonists are right in assuming, as they seem to do, that religion and philanthropy predispose men to calumny and falsehood. But I chose wholly to decline such testimony; because I was anxious to place out of all possible doubt in fair and reasoning minds, the real nature of a system, which owes its toleration, by this humane and liberal land, chiefly to darkness and delusion.

The self-prescribed restriction was fully adhered to through-

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* Vol. I. p. 10, 11.

out my former volume. I kept, indeed, considerably within its promised limits; for my engagement did not restrain me from citing evidence on the anti-slavery side, in confirmation of any facts which I had previously shewn to have been admitted by colonial opponents;* and I might have given to such facts much greater effect, by adding the language of willing, to those of reluctant witnesses; but this was a right from the use of which, though reserved to myself, I in general abstained.

The desired effect on the minds of my readers was, I trust, not wholly lost. I know that some of them, who had doubted before whether negro slavery was so very odious and cruel an institution as its opponents represented it to be, declared their full conviction on that subject.—There was seen to be in the barbarous and iniquitous laws by which the state was framed and maintained, enough for its condemnation; and enough also to prove that its practical character, under masters who made and retained such laws, and pertinaciously opposed their repeal, must be extremely oppressive and severe. It was seen also, how little credit was due on such subjects to the colonial authorities, and to their most respectable agents in this country; since it was shewn that they had not scrupled to misrepresent, in the boldest and grossest manner, before the Privy Council and Parliament, in their defence of the African trade, almost every canon, and every principle, of their then existing slave law.

My book, though it certainly obtained sufficient attention with the colonial party, long remained unanswered. It seemed as if seeing themselves convicted of public misrepresentation and imposture, as well as of a truly barbarous spirit of legislation, out of their own mouths, and by their own records,

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* It may be best to transcribe here the words of the engagement itself. "It is on such evidence (the colonial) that I shall chiefly rely; nor shall "I assume the truth of any statement adverse to the colonial system that has "has ever been controverted, however unimpeachable the testimony may be "on which it stands, until I have shewn it to have been directly or indirectly "confirmed by the same decisive evidence, the concessions of the colonists "themselves."—Vol I. p. 10, 11.

they despaired of parrying the attack; and thought silence the best resort; for nearly three years elapsed without any reply, until the repeated remarks of anti-slavery writers, who inferred that my statements were tacitly admitted, pushed their opponents into a different and desperate course.

Expedients of the foulest kind were then adopted; such as attempting to discredit my statements by partial and mutilated extracts from them, calculated not only to conceal their true sense, but often to convey a different or opposite one; and by citing in a like partial and fraudulent way, the public records to which I referred, in order to furnish out an apparent refutation.

Such practices, when a man's purse is assailed by them, are commonly repelled by a terse piece of controversy called an indictment; but when not his bond, but his book, is the subject of this *crimen falsi*, though its purpose is the execrable one of cheating helpless and wretched multitudes out of their only human hope, the compassion of the British people, there is no possible remedy that I know of, except requesting that those readers who possess the book and the answer, and have access to the documents referred to, will take the trouble of collating them with each other.*

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* The work chiefly here referred to is entitled, "A practical view of the "present state of slavery in the West Indies, or an Examination of Mr. "Stephens' Slavery of the British West India Colonies. By Alexander "Barclay, lately and for twenty-one years resident in Jamaica."—Its readers must have strong faith if they believe the author's account of his life and occupations, and at the same time that the work was his own. It is certainly a most erudite and able piece of controversy for a Jamaica overseer; whose life had been previously spent in the labours, not of the pen, but the whip. The colonial writers have derided justly enough the appellation of "*book-keeper*," by which the occupation is dignified in that island, though both writing and reading are foreign to its duties; but Mr. Barclay may raise it hereafter, perhaps, to the higher title of "book-*maker*."

We are desired further to believe that this volume, of 456 pages, was composed by Mr. Barclay for his amusement on his passage from Jamaica to England; in consequence of his having fortunately chanced to put on board my book among others for his entertainment on the voyage; and that the greater part of it, as given to the public, was written out before his arrival,

This indeed is a remedy of which, with many or most of those who were gratuitously supplied with the pretended answer, I could not have the benefit; because it did not appear till long after my former volume had ceased to be procurable by purchase. I might, it is true, reprint here the many misrepresented passages, together with the deceptious extracts and replies; but this would be to rate too highly the reader's patience, and impair his attention, perhaps, to matters of much more importance than my defence against such an antagonist. I will content myself, therefore, with exposing a few of the many instances of his extreme unfairness, when my subjects lead to the notice of them; leaving the reader to judge by such specimens of the rest.

I may, however, avail myself here of a summary mode of defence which some fellow-labourers in this cause long since volunteered on my behalf, against the vague general charge of inaccuracy, which the work called Mr. Barclay's, and others that followed and cited it, had made against me. The authors were challenged to maintain that charge, by pointing out a single instance that could fairly support the imputation.* They were repeatedly defied to do so; and at the peril of their own credit; being told that their declining it would be regarded as retractation. Yet they have all re-

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(see the preface). By some happy coincidence with this preternatural facility of composition, he must have found on board a large library of controversial works on slavery; besides the other books to which he refers.

Who can sufficiently admire the good fortune of the West India Committee, in finding that long *desideratum*, a reply to my Law of Slavery, thus fortuitously and wonderfully supplied, by a mere volunteer; and by one who could furnish from his own experience and unquestionable authority, the facts of which they were so much in need, in order to grapple with the evidence of their own testimony and their own records!

But though they have thus been rescued from the expence and the difficulty of authorship, they must not escape from its responsibility. They have so strongly accredited, and so widely circulated the work, that I shall till they disavow it, take leave to treat it as their own.

* See the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter of November 1826, No. 18; and that of June 1828, No. 37.

mained silent: with the exception of one, who explained away and virtually gave up the charge, by resorting for the impeachment of what I had shewn to be the *law*, to what he had assumed, on Mr. Barclay's or such like authority, to be the *practice*. Palpable though this evasion is, it will be found to pervade nearly the whole of what has been boasted of as a full answer to, and refutation of, my former volume.

As I mean to adhere, in the continuation of my work, to the same plan of demonstration that I have hitherto pursued, it may be proper to notice some general objections that have been made to my mode of conducting it.

By some of my antagonists, or one of them at least, it is held unfair to cite against the colonial party, the statements of their known agents, witnesses, and accredited partizans, unless I adopt the whole of their testimony, however false and inconsistent (see Barclay, p. 3, 4.); which is, in effect, to require that I should treat the evidence of my opponents as if it were my own; and to impose on me a rule that would make my plan of demonstration utterly hopeless and absurd. He who calls a witness must, I admit, take the whole of his testimony together, and either support its consistency or forfeit its benefit; but in relying on an antagonist's evidence, I have a clear right to use any of the facts it furnishes, without admitting the rest; and even to reason from its inconsistency, against its general effect.

This undeniable controversial right I certainly have used, and shall continue to do so. I shall prove, for instance, from details furnished by my opponents, the shocking and opprobrious truth, that the slaves on sugar plantations are forced to work from sixteen to eighteen hours per diem; regarding the preposterous general statements by the same persons, that the labour of these poor drudges is leisure and mere pastime when compared to that of the English peasants, as what I am at liberty to pass unnoticed; unless when I choose rather to cite them in order to shew their utter falsehood and effrontery.

Another objection has been made to my former volume which is contrary not only to reason but to fact. I have been charged with quoting, as still in use, cruel and opprobrious ancient slave laws, which have become obsolete; and some

that have actually been repealed, for the sake of unfairly imputing to the colonists of the present æra, a harsh and barbarous spirit, that prevailed at a former distant period, but had long ceased to exist.

The charge is utterly groundless. It is true, indeed, that among the laws which I cited and digested, many were not very modern; but their true dates were not withheld. The oldest and worst of them, in several colonies, had their origin in his late Majesty's reign: nay, some of the most revolting were passed within the present century. — That every act of assembly which I quoted of an earlier date than 1788 remained then in force, appears incontestably from the printed compilation of them as existing laws, made in that year by a Committee of the Privy Council, in its Report on the Slave Trade; from which, with very few, if any, exceptions, all my abstracts of an anterior date were taken.

Nor did I represent any of those laws as unrepealed, which I had not good reason for believing to be so; for the assemblies have not been slow to take credit here for every improvement, real or ostensible, in their slave codes; and all acts of that description having been from time to time transmitted and laid before Parliament, and printed, at several periods between 1788 and 1823, when my former volume went to press, I carefully reviewed them, and left no repeal or material alteration unnoticed.* Further collections of new slave acts in different colonies have been since printed by Parliament; and if a new edition of my first volume should be called for, the assemblies shall have full credit in it for any good enactments they have recently made; though I have seen very little indeed in them that goes to redeem the character of their legislation in any degree, by more than ostensible reforms.

Nor did I omit to give them credit for the practical disuse of severe laws still in force, when I knew it to be due to them, though that candour has been ill repaid.†

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* See a note in my preface to that volume, page 48, 49.

† Among the many gross misrepresentations, for instance, of their much extolled champion, Mr. Barclay, I am vehemently arraigned in reference to

Though it is untrue that I availed myself of any repealed or obsolete law to discredit unfairly the existing slave codes,

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my statement, that the law gives any property which the slave may acquire, to his master, though the proposition is undenied and undeniable, for what is called "*a most barbarous attack on the West India character.*" It is assumed that in stating this, I imputed to the masters in general a cruel use of that right; though the insidious commentator himself found it for his purpose afterwards to quote, from the immediate context in my work, the following paragraph: — "*It is, indeed, alleged by the Colonial party, that though the "master is legally entitled to all the property acquired by the slave, he never "asserts that title; and, with a few exceptions, I believe the proposition to be "true. The slave's little property is, indeed, sometimes seized by way of "punishment, or as a mean of obtaining restitution of property suspected to "have been stolen from the master; but upon purely sordid principles, I re-"member only one instance of such an exercise of the owner's power; and in "that his conduct was generally condemned.*" (See Barclay's Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies, p. 47, 48. See also, and compare, my former Volume, p. 60—62.)

The reader may be curious to know how my antagonist could possibly hope to sustain his imputation; and yet avail himself of such a context. The honest stratagem was this:—I had shewn from an instance given by one of the witnesses of the slave-trading party, that in Africa the law was so different, that the slaves often possess great property, while the masters themselves are sometimes poor; and that, nevertheless, that property is so fully protected by the laws, that a slave had been known to offer to give the price of a hundred slaves for his freedom, which the poor master fain would have accepted, but was prevented by the local law; because the slave having not been born such in the country, but purchased, he could not be enfranchised.

The use I made of it was merely to shew, by an obvious inference, another important contrast between the British colonial, and the African *law*,— viz. that the African master had not the power of corporal punishment; because if he had possessed the power of the West Indian master in that respect, the price might have been easily extorted without the manumission. The stricture, therefore, was manifestly on the colonial *law*, not on the *practice*: but my opponent, artfully separating the passage from its context, exclaims, "What other impression does this convey, *what other is "it meant to convey*, but that the West India planters, legally armed "with the power of the dungeon, the chain, and the whip, use them "to extort from their humble labourers the fruits of their industry? "For what purpose," he adds, "*such a monstrous accusation was brought "forward*, it is impossible to conjecture, as in the very next passage "he acknowledges it to be without foundation." Impossible, indeed! that I could mean to insinuate an accusation against the planters in one

there was one purpose for which I might very justifiably have cited them even if they had been all repealed. The unwritten customary law of slavery, as well as the practical character of the state, had been grossly misrepresented by my opponents; and in delineating both, from a collocation of the facts which their own evidence had furnished, and thereby falsifying their general statements, I had more than one powerful prepossession to combat; for it was not easy to believe of Englishmen and gentlemen, that they had not only built up and still defended an institution in the colonies, more barbarous than any that ever elsewhere existed upon earth; but that they had employed in its defence, before the British Government and Parliament, the foul means of direct and wilful misrepresentation.

Nor had my opponents neglected amply to avail themselves of this advantage. They incessantly objected, as they still do, to every revolting account of their system, not only the favourable presumptions due to the natives of this humane and liberal land, though placed beyond the Atlantic; but the credit that belonged to many respectable witnesses who had given very favourable, though most unfounded, statements of the slaves' condition in point of law, as well as practice.

It was highly important, therefore, to shew by authentic records, what barbarous laws, some of the worst of which were of very recent dates, these migrated Englishmen and

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paragraph, of which I expressly and gratuitously acquitted them in the next, unless I was insane.

This, however, is by no means one of the strongest specimens which might be given of this author's most disingenuous commentaries. They are to be found in almost every page of his work.

His ordinary mode of defence and refutation, is to oppose to what I stated and proved to be the *law*, that which he maintains, on his own mere assertion, to be the *practice*; or, at best, to adduce some idle and impotent qualifications by recent ostensible acts of assembly, which I had shewn to be neither executed, nor meant for, nor capable of execution; and on such premises to charge me with having mis-stated existing and effective slave laws, to the records of which I had referred, or unwritten rules, which I had proved to be in general use, and recognized as customary law in every colonial court.

gentlemen, when inured to the government of slaves, had been capable of framing; but still more so, as they were for the most part undeniably in full force at the very time when such favorable but false accounts were given of their slave codes, by the colonial agents and witnesses, before the Privy Council and Parliament. Nor would my citation of them for those purposes have been at all unfair, if they had since that period been finally repealed; whereas the repealing acts passed before I wrote were for the most part of limited duration. Moreover, I was able to shew, that almost every pretended mitigation or improvement subsequently made by the meliorating acts, was illusory, or practically useless; that the sole object of those ostensible reformations was to prevent the interposition of parliament; and that the former spirit of legislation, which I could not exhibit without citing those barbarous laws, still, in some of those colonies, openly and avowedly prevailed. But it is not true that, even under these circumstances, I cited knowingly any law that had been repealed or disused in practice when I wrote, without apprising my readers of the fact.

The right of quoting former evidence, for the sake of discrediting the adverse party that produced it, is one that I certainly shall not relinquish in this second part of my work; for the practice of slavery was still more grossly misrepresented at the same period, and by the same witnesses, than its laws; and the exposure of their errors and impostures is no unimportant part of the duty I have now to perform.

It would indeed be necessary to cite here with some particularity the colonial evidence of that period, if only for the sake of shewing the practical nature of the system I have to describe as given by its administrators; for we have since had none but ex parte examinations or statements from them; in which they have prudently confined themselves, for the most part, to convenient generalities; avoiding many specific details into which they were formerly led; and which are essential to a clear conception, and fair investigation of the case. Several changes and improvements are alleged to have taken place since the parliamentary evidence was given; but the truth or falsehood of these allegations obviously cannot be shewn without com-

paring the former case, as it stood on the evidence, with that which at present exists.

I shall for these reasons have frequently to adduce, under the future divisions of my subject, further citations from those very important, but now almost recondite volumes, the printed Reports of the Committees of Privy Council, and the House of Commons, on the slave trade.

But there is one description of evidence contained in them, the notice of which seems most proper for these preliminary remarks. I mean that of witnesses, whom the colonial petitioners called to testify as to the general character of their system, in respect of humanity, liberality, and mildness: for this is a mode of defence to which, however weak and unsatisfactory when opposed to specific and well-established imputations, the colonists have always had recourse, with no small effect in this country; and my much-vaunted antagonist, the respondent of my former volume, invites, or rather defies me, in his preliminary chapter, to reply to it. He taxes me with illiberality, and want of candour, for refusing credit to the planters themselves even, when so defending their own body and their own individual conduct; but still more for disregarding the testimony of such men as were their compurgators before parliament; "officers civil, naval, and "military, in the service of Government, who had visited the "colonies." "Many of these, doubtless," says the work ascribed to Barclay, "went from the mother country with strong "prejudices; but have *they*, on their return, told this tale of "horror? Have *they* said that the slaves are ill-treated, op-"pressed, or unhappy? Have *they* not borne testimony to "the contrary? And is there any thing so very captivating "in the system and management described by Mr. Stephen, "that even a person who has no interest, could not see it without "being enamoured of it, adopting the prejudices of the colo-"nists, and becoming a convert to their cause, against truth "and justice."*

Very freely will I answer these interrogatories; and more fully perhaps, than their propounder or his employers would

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* Barclay, p. 5.

desire; and since he relies so much on the force of such auxiliaries, as to put them in his front line, for the sake of preliminary effect, it is fit that I should grapple with them at the onset. It is true, that honorable men of the descriptions here stated, and some of them officers of very high public character, did come forward as witnesses before Parliament in 1790, at the instance of the planters, to support their petitions against the abolition of the slave trade; and that their testimony, as to the then condition and treatment of the slaves, was not less favourable than that of the planters themselves. I will here accommodate my catechist with a few extracts quite for his purpose.

Admiral Lord Shuldham.

Q. "What has your lordship observed of the behaviour of "masters towards their negro slaves, in those islands where "you have commanded."

A. "*It has been mild, gentle, and indulgent in all respects; "equal to what masters generally shew towards their servants in "this kingdom.*"*

Admiral Sir Peter Parker.

Q. "What did you observe of the behaviour and treat- "ment of masters towards their slaves in the several islands "where you have been?"

A. "From the best observations I could make, their treat- "ment was *lenient and humane. I never heard of even one in- "stance of severity towards a slave during the whole time I was "on the Jamaica station.*" (This he stated to have been more than four years.)

Q. "Did the slaves in general appear to be properly fed "and clothed and lodged?"

A. "*They not only appeared to me to be properly fed, clothed "and lodged, but were, in my opinion, in a more comfortable situ- "ation than the lower class of people in any part of Europe; "Great Britain not excepted.*"

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* Commons Report on the Slave Trade of 1790, p. 404.

Q. " Did it appear to you that more labour was required " of the negroes than they could properly bear ?"

" A. " *By no means.*"*

SIR ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, KNIGHT OF THE BATH.

Q. " What have you observed with respect to the conduct " of masters towards their negroes in Jamaica ?"

A. " It appeared that it was *marked by great kindness and* " *humanity.*"

Q. " Did it appear to you that their treatment was mild " and humane ?"

A. " It did."

Q. " Did they appear to be properly fed, clothed and " lodged."

A. " They did." †

LORD RODNEY, ADMIRAL GARDNER, SIR J. DALLING. and other Officers gave accounts hardly, if at all, less favourable of the general system.

ADMIRAL BARRINGTON, being asked, " What have you " observed of the behaviour of masters towards their negro " slaves in those islands where you have commanded ?" answered, " *Always the greatest humanity ;*" and afterwards added, " *they seemed so happy that he had wished himself a* " *negro.*" ‡

I will add extracts from the evidence of only two of the planters, who were examined at the same period ; and among scores of eminent ones who spoke strongly to the same laudatory effect, will select gentlemen of that description who had filled high official situations in the colonies ; and had much personal acquaintance with the practice they described, on their own estates.

SIR RALPH PAYNE, AFTERWARDS LORD LAVINGTON, twice Governor of the Leeward Islands, and proprietor of several estates in Antigua and St. Christopher.

" *I trust I do not hazard a contradiction when I say that* " *there is no slave, at least none that I ever saw, the severity of*

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* Commons Report on the Slave Trade of 1790, p. 477.

† Ibid. 451. ‡ Ibid. 405.

"*whose labour is by any means comparable to that of a day la-*
"*bourer in England.*"

Q. "Did the slaves in general appear to be properly fed,
"clothed and lodged?"

A. "*Most unquestionably they did.*"*

DAVID PARRY, ESQ., for seven years Governor of Barbadoes, and Proprietor of estates in that Island.

Q. "What have you observed of the behaviour of masters
"towards their slaves?"

A. "*Every possible kindness, care and attention.*"

Q. "Is not their treatment remarkably gentle and hu-
"mane?"

A. "*Certainly, so.*"

Q. "Did it appear to you that more labour was required
"of them than they could properly bear?"

A. "*Not nearly so much as I think their owners had a right*
"*to demand; and the common labour of the negro there would*
"*be play to any peasant in this country.*"†

How satisfactory, how truly honorable to the planters of the Sugar Colonies, was such evidence! No wonder that it deeply impressed the British Parliament, and contributed mainly to the protection of the slave trade against the efforts of *fanatics* and *enthusiasts*, adding thereby seventeen years of protracted life, and enormous extension to that beneficent traffic; for be it observed that these testimonies refer to times when the trade was in full vigour; and though no small part of the negroes whose situation and treatment are here depicted, must have been recently imported Africans, now called by the colonial writers "savages," and, "rude barbarians," and therefore, we are told, unavoidably subjected to a rigorous discipline; for no distinction was made by these well-informed observers, between their condition, and that of the creole slaves. All were treated with equal tenderness, and all equally content and happy, if these accounts were true.

What a pity is it that the planters were ever bereft of a

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* Commons Report on the Slave Trade of 1790, p. 435.

† Ibid. 464.

trade that produced such benignant effects; converting by millions the barbarous and hapless natives of Africa into the enviable condition here described, and furnishing their masters with an endless succession of new objects for the exercise of their benevolence, liberality, and self-denial! The only drawback on the happy consequences was, that the lives of those fortunate beings, the new negroes especially, though merry, were found to be short: but this, no doubt, was the effect of that excess of kindness and indulgence which pampered them too much, and added indolence to repletion. The speedy loss of twenty-five by the lowest, and fifty by other estimates, in every hundred, by their "seasoning" into ease and luxury, might detract, indeed, from the *prudence* of their planting benefactors; but added to the praise of that unexampled benignity, which made slavery, instead of its proverbial wretchedness in other countries, a state to be envied not only by our free peasants, but by a British admiral!

Having thus taken up the gauntlet thrown down by Mr. Barclay, and fairly given to the planters the full benefit of that disinterested and honorable testimony, which he challenged me to answer; I must now take leave to place under the eyes of my readers some accounts much more recent, and of rather a different kind.

"*Prior to the abolition of the slave trade, no planter of any* "*candour could deny that the evils of the system were great.* "*No sooner, however, had this measure been accomplished, than* "*the whole mode of treatment changed,*" &c. "*Immediately* "*subsequent to the years* 1807 *and* 1808, *care and attention on* "*the part of the master commenced.*" *

How, Mr. M'Donnell!!! *commenced after* 1807! Strange anachronism! Why, seventeen years before that period, they had attained the *ne plus ultra* of maturity and perfection — "*The whole mode of treatment since changed*"! It has been a sad revolution, then, for the poor slaves; since we are assured on such high authority as it would be "illiberal and uncandid to doubt," that they were before treated with "*every possible*

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* Considerations on Negro Slavery, &c., by Alexander M'Donnell, Esq., Secretary to the Committee of the Inhabitants of Demerara, p. 209.

kindness, care, and attention." The change could be only for the worse; and an *entire* change must have been the entire substitution of neglect, harshness, and severity, for consummate "*care, humanity, and kindness.*"

Who, it may be asked, is the writer that thus oversets the whole case so well got up by the West India Committee, and so well attested before Parliament, in 1790? Who is the bold man that thus ventures to give the lie to all that a hundred respectable planters then alleged, and all that their honorable witnesses confirmed; telling us that "*no planter of any candour could deny*" what they all stoutly *did* deny; nay, called other men liars for asserting? It is no other than one of the best accredited colonial champions of the present day. It is Mr. M'Donnell, the secretary to the general committee of all the inhabitants of Demerara, constituted for the purpose of opposing the reformation of slavery proposed in 1823 by His Majesty's government! I cite the passage from a work written and published by him as their official organ; and which has been very extensively and gratuitously circulated in this country by that fourth estate of this realm, the West India Committee, or its members. Nor is it by this single passage only, that he thus renounces and repudiates their former case. I have extracted it, among many others in that work to the same effect, only as one of the most compendious. It is in truth the main drift of his arguments, to persuade the people of this country that the cessation of the slave trade has *given birth to*, and will progressively mature, without their further interference, the mitigation and cessation of slavery. He affects systematically to distinguish various different stages in the process, to the first of which he alleges the state has already arrived; and admits that up to the abolition in 1807, slavery existed in its worst degree of severity. *

Many other are the colonial authorities that have contradicted not less directly the evidence of 1790. Dr. Collins' will be shewn to have done so in every particular, as well as in its general effect. But I will cite here only one testimony more; and it shall be that of the very antagonist who has been hardy enough to defy me to this review; even *Mr. Barclay himself!*

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* See p. 204. to 227.

He, like Mr. M'Donnell, plainly admits that at the time when the respectable witnesses here quoted, represented the condition of the slaves as being so happy and enviable, and for seventeen years later, the work of mitigating its extreme rigour had not even begun; and ascribes the origin and pretended progress of it to the cessation of the African trade. "*The first stage of improvement is by far the most difficult to a* "*rude and barbarous people; but the progress that the negroes* "*have already made is far from inconsiderable. No person who* "*saw the situation of the slaves in Jamaica twenty years ago* "(i. e. fourteen years after the evidence of 1790) *could have* "*believed it possible that so great a change for the better could* "*have taken place in so short a period.*"*

Certainly not, if the testimony I have cited was true; for no such change was possible.

He proceeds to specify the improvements which he alleges to have taken place; contrasting them in parallel tables with what he admits to have been the former case. I will not follow him fully into his particulars here; because several of them relate to parts of the system not within the scope of my present work, and any which may fall within it, will be noticed in the proper places hereafter. But I will extract two or three of them, as fair samples of the whole.

"When savage Africans were pouring into Jamaica, &c., the master's power of punishing his slaves was little restrained by law; and was exercised to a great extent by the subordinate white people and drivers.	"It is now limited to 39 stripes, to be inflicted by order and in presence of the master or overseer, and 10 by subordinate agents: and, comparatively speaking, is but seldom required at all. There is not now one punishment for twenty that were inflicted fifteen or twenty years ago.
"Ten years ago chains were in common use on the plantations, for punishing criminal slaves.	"They are now entirely abolished.
"For cruel and improper punishment, slaves had formerly no adequate redress.	"Now they are manumised, and provided with an annuity for life; and magistrates are appointed a council of protection, to attend to their complaints.

* Barclay's Present State of Slavery, &c., Introduction, p. 21.

"Twenty years ago, there was "scarcely a negro baptised in Ja- "maica."

"Now they are nearly all bap- "tised."

I will not suppose any of my readers so totally ignorant of the public discussions on the subjects of punishments and religious instruction, as to stand in need of being informed or satisfied that the improvements here alleged, are all either frivolous or wholly unfounded in fact. I might otherwise refer to my former volume under the proper titles, for expositions of their nullity or absolute falsehood; and appeal for my confirmation to volumes of official documents now before the public in Parliamentary papers.

The other improvements alleged by him are of a like deceptious character. But while I protest against all Mr. Barclay's propositions in his second column, I thank him for his admission in the first. They confirm me in many statements in my former works, the truth of which has been loudly denied; while they shew in almost every particular, how grossly deceived the respectable witnesses of 1790 were in their eulogies of negro slavery.

In saying they were "*deceived*" as far at least as relates to the naval and military officers, I desire to be understood seriously and literally; being far from supposing that they did not sincerely entertain the very erroneous opinions they gave. Nor is it hard to explain how officers, or other strangers, may visit the West Indies, or even stay there a considerable time, and return with impressions as to the general treatment of slaves, widely remote from the truth.

From Mr. Barclay's suggestion, that such men doubtless go from this country with strong prejudices adverse to the colonists, I must wholly dissent. The very contrary I know from much observation to be the truth. The fact is, that naval and military officers, usually carry to the West Indies a prepossession of which their hospitable entertainers, the slave masters there, do not fail to avail themselves, and which greatly favors the universal policy of all the proprietors they associate with; that of keeping from the eyes of respectable strangers the more offensive parts of the system, and studiously contriving to bring within their notice, whatever may seem to make for

its credit. This prepossession, is a notion that the planters suffer in public opinion unjustly, *through the popular odium attached to the use of the whip*, which their own professional experience has taught them to be necessary for maintaining subordination and discipline; or which at least they believe to be so. Some of themselves, perhaps, have incurred unmerited censure on that score; and may consequently be the more ready to sympathise with those whom they are taught to regard as victims of the same popular prejudice.

Reflection, indeed, might suggest to them the essential and fearful difference between a power of corporal punishment intrusted for public purposes, to honorable men, who have no self-interest, real or imaginary in abusing it; and the same, or a far wider discretional power, placed in the hands of vulgar and sordid men, unrestrained by any sense of honorary or legal responsibility, and whose gains depend on the strict performance of laborious services which the whip is employed to enforce. If it were the duty of soldiers or seamen to work hard for the private benefit of their officers, and the power of corporal punishment without a court martial, were given to the latter for enforcing that duty, the two cases would be less widely different; but to give them a further approximation, the boatswains, and serjeants and every other petty officer, must be armed with the same authority, and have an interest also in its use. We must also divest the superior officers of their elevated professional feelings; and suppose that the sole object of their occupation is gain.

Nevertheless, the prepossession here noticed, is not always or generally corrected by such reflections. It would effectually be so, if the interior discipline of a plantation were exposed to the view of such guests as these; but they see as little of it in the houses of their public or private entertainers, as a respected visitor in this country does of the family discipline, and ordinary economies, of his host; or the treatment of paupers in a neighbouring workhouse. The only slaves brought within their notice, are domestics in their holiday dresses; and if faults are committed by these, the punishment of them is of course postponed till their departure. As to the field negroes, they may be seen perhaps at their work in the cane pieces by the passing stranger; but the drivers are too well instructed to use

their whips in his presence. Still less can he learn, without a prying curiosity that would be highly offensive, the excessive times of their daily and nocturnal labour, and the scanty amount of their weekly allowances of food, the articles of oppression in which I shall shew that their worst ill-treatment consists.

If these difficulties of observation are doubted, I beg leave to refer to the following extract from a work lately published. It comes from an apologist of the system; otherwise of course I should not use it. He is also one of those writers whose style has been the most useful to the bad cause they support, and the most mischievous to that of the unheard and unfortunate slaves; for he affects, in a very specious strain, moderation and a mediating spirit; admitting in a small degree, and with laboured palliations, abuses too notorious to be denied; and chiding those who call oppression and inhumanity by their proper names, or exhibit them in their true dimensions, as intemperate partizans.* He is, like all such writers, a professed friend to humane improvements, but would postpone *ad Græcas Kalendas*, the emancipation of the slaves.† I must nevertheless do him the justice to say that he writes with ability; and fairly enough acknowledges some truths that his fellow-labourers have boldly denied.

Speaking of a gentleman who was making a tour through the Leeward Islands to obtain information on these subjects, he has the following passage.

"An individual must possess a greater share of discern-
" ment than falls to the lot of most observers, in order to put
" it out of the power of an interested guide to deceive him,
" unless his opportunities for observation are constant, and
" unrestrained by ceremony. The true condition of the slaves,
" upon an estate which might be governed with the grossest
" abuses of humanity, would not be made apparent to the
" casual visitor, if it were contrary to the wishes of his con-

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* Observations upon the State of Slavery in the Island of Santa Cruz. &c.; published by Simpkin and Marshall, 1829. See especially his strictures on the Edinburgh Review, &c. 70, 71.

† Ibid. 86.

" ductor or host. Means could be easily resorted to, which " would compel even misery to cast aside its semblance, and " to wear the temporary guise of content. It may probably " be attributed to the difference between visits of social fes- " tivity, and those of a settled and ordinary reception *en* " *famille*, that evidence so much at variance with the facts, " and yet tendered with a perfect conviction of its truth, " should have been given by many individuals of high rank " during the discussions which preceded and led to the abo- " lition of the slave trade. ' *We do not wash our linen before* " *strangers*,' was the coarse but pithy observation of one " whose knowledge of human nature was both extensive and " varied: nor is it reasonable to suppose that planters feel de- " sirous that their visitors should see slavery in its worst " colours; or witness the painful exhibitions which are seldom " entirely dispensed with upon the best governed plantations."*

I heartily wish that these remarks, the obvious truth of which might recommend them, even had they been made by an anti-slavery pen, were transcribed, and delivered with his commission or instructions, to every governor or other public officer sent to the West Indies, who happens fortunately to be, what they all ought to be, unattached by property or connections to the cause of the planters; and that they were enjoined to make no official reports as to the general condition and treatment of slaves, until they had lived at least a year in that country, after the long round of festive entertainments which always follow their first arrival.

Even those sacred office-bearers, who are now sent to the sugar colonies, may stand in great need of such cautions. They might, in one instance, have prevented a Right Reverend Prelate from committing himself inextricably as an apologist of slavery, almost as soon as he had touched the shore of Jamaica; and shutting out most effectually from his own ears, truths which others took good care to keep from his eyes, by at once engaging as his private chaplain, the most active and violent public champion of slavery that the island contained.

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* Observations upon the State of Slavery in the Island of Santa Cruz, &c., p. 5.

Another Right Reverend Prelate, for whom I feel very high respect, might also have escaped the premature formation and avowal of views, which I am persuaded he has already in great measure corrected,* and will, if his valuable life is spared, ere long find cause to reverse. If so, his brief error will probably redound to his own honor, and the benefit of the oppressed multitudes committed to his spiritual charge; for I know his character too well to doubt that when fully delivered from those delusions which the concurrent assertions, and systematic artifices, of all who were admitted to his society unavoidably impressed upon his mind, he will frankly acknowledge and disclaim them. He will not be less candid and manly in this respect than that gallant officer, Governor Arthur; who, though when he first visited the West Indies he was a warm friend to the anti-slavery cause, or, to quote his own term, "a perfect Wilberforce," became, soon after his arrival, so complete a victim to the ordinary arts of the slave masters on the spot, that he hastened expressly to retract his first opinions, and bore spontaneous testimony, in his official dispatches, to the exemplary general humanity that prevailed in the colony over which he had come to preside.

Soon, however, did experience teach him how grossly he had been imposed on. He found that practices existed extensively under his own immediate government, more cruel and atrocious than any that his original views had ascribed to colonial slave-masters; and that the general spirit of the community made it impossible to suppress them. A second confession of error was of course mortifying enough; but he did not hesitate to make it, and freely to retract, in a letter to the Colonial Minister, his former retractation.†

Though I have been led thus largely to explain, in justice to the eminent naval and military officers whose errors my antagonist has compelled me to expose, the sources of their

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* My chief reason for so thinking is, that his lordship has now the honour of being abused in that ordinary gazette of the slave-masters — the *Morning Journal;* and other publications known to be in their employment and pay.

† The correspondence is in the official papers printed by orders of 6th June 1817, p. 115., and 16th June 1823.

deceptious testimony; and thongh I sincerely regard the blame of it as imputable not to themselves, but to the well-informed petitioners who called them; let it be remembered that I have been reasoning not to repel their evidence, but to excuse it; for we have seen that it has been wholly overthrown, however inconsistently and ungratefully, by the same party at whose instance it was given. If I have failed to shew, that the misrepresentations of those highly respectable witnesses may have been sincere, so much the worse was the conduct of those who knowing the true case, brought them forward to disguise it.

Here some of my readers may perhaps be disposed to ask, "Do "you then deny the last representations, as well as the first; con- "tending, that no general improvements have actually taken "place during the last twenty years? and if so, how do you "account for these public assertions that the colonists have "recently made with apparent candour, because at the grievous "expense of their own credit, and that of their predecessors "and co-partizans, in respect of their former evidence?"

I will answer the last question first. The case is by no means new. It is but the last iteration of pretences, that have been set up as speciously, and supported by equal authority; and yet afterwards refuted and abandoned, at every successive stage of a controversy, that has now subsisted forty years.

Indeed this is short of the truth; for even in the Parliamentary investigations of 1790, there was the same affectation of candour, in the retrospective condemnation of former practices, with which the credulity of the British public has been often since, and is now again abused. Many of the colonial witnesses then admitted, that the slavery of a former period, had been rigorous and cruel; and took credit for the very lenient and satisfactory state at which they represented it to have arrived, as the effect of improvements within the time of their own recollection. In this part of their case also, the planters were supported by some of their naval and military friends.

Question to COMMODORE GARDNER. "Do you think the "slaves are better or worse treated now than they were for- "merly?"

A. "I am confident when I say they are much better "treated now, than they were when I first knew that island "(Jamaica)." *

In answer to the same question, VICE ADMIRAL ARBUTHNOT said, "*Beyond comparison better:* in Jamaica, much im- "proved since I first knew it, which was as long ago as in the "year 1763." †

Here we find the era of improvements carried back to a period now no less than sixty-six years distant. They, must to be sure, have had a very slow growth; since the colonists now admit by the pen of Mr. M'Donnell, that they have not yet advanced beyond their first stage; but they certainly lessen the wonder by dating the commencement of the progress, at least seventeen years later, than when these gallant officers and many other witnesses were called by the West India petitioners to prove its consummation.

Reasonably did the planters exult over the abolitionists in the effect of this plausible, but now repudiated testimony. It not only gave a long respite to their beloved slave trade; but gave colour to their long continued boast, that the humanity of their system had been vindicated from the charges of their opponents.‡ But it was because their cause was tried before assemblies, to all the unbiassed part of whom, the whole subject was new, and of difficult investigation; and who therefore, instead of well weighing the evidence as to the details of controverted facts, probably took the easier part of judging, as jurymen are prone to do, by the respectable and imposing testimony adduced as to general character.

The slave trade, however, was soon found to stand in need of further support; and a stronger or fresher colonial case

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* Commons Report of 1790, p. 422. † Ibid. 410.

‡ See a Report of the Jamaica House of Assembly of November 23, 1804, which was laid before Parliament, and printed by order of the House of Commons of February 25, 1805, p. 12. "The particular accusations of "oppression without the means of redress, of avaricious and unfeeling rigour "exercised towards our slaves, &c., heaped upon the inhabitants of the Bri- "tish West India Colonies, *have been repelled and refuted by such irrefragable* "*evidence*, that they can now make little impression, except on the pre- "judiced and uninformed."

was called for to maintain it, not by the enemies of slavery, but its friends.

The West India committee of proprietors and merchants in this country, constituted for the purpose of upholding that iniquitous commerce (to which we are now modestly told the colonies had been long averse), suggested the absolute necessity of parrying the further attacks upon it by Mr. Wilberforce and his party in Parliament, by such acts of Assembly for meliorating the state of the slaves, as might hold out a future prospect of putting an end to the trade, by preserving and increasing the native black population; and Lord Seaford, as chairman of the Committee, not only communicated resolutions to that effect to the different islands through their agents*, but moved for and obtained, in the House of Commons, an address to the Crown, recommending such improvements.

This proceeding, which took place in 1797, backed by the most urgent solicitations of eminent proprietors resident here, to their friends in the islands, gave birth to most of the meliorating laws; almost every enactment of which, and several of their express recitals, were direct, or virtual contradictions, of the evidence given seven years before.

I refer for those laws to my former volume, and to the many parliamentary papers in which they are set forth at large; and dare venture to affirm that no man can read many of their provisions without being convinced that the state so much eulogized in 1790 was one of the most opprobrious rigour and barbarity. The palliatory remedies prescribed, shewed sufficiently the malignant and desperate nature of the case.

Thenceforth a new era, and a new source, of improvements,

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* See the Resolutions at large, and some of the correspondence, in papers printed by order of the House of Commons of the 8th June, 1804, H. 58—60. The second Resolution, which will suffice to characterise the whole proceeding, was in the following terms: — "*Resolved, that the question of "abolition will continue to be agitated year after year, and as often as the "forms of the House permit; and that neither the House of Commons, nor the "country at large, will suffer it to rest till some steps have been taken which "may afford them reason to believe that every regulation has been adopted "which is consistent with the safety of the colonies.*"

were adopted by the colonial apologists. The *meliorating laws*, we were now told, had done every thing for the slaves that could possibly be done; and to every new charge and proof of practical oppression, was opposed some specious provision of that useless and impracticable code. Mr. Barclay, as we have partly seen, assuming the full efficacy of those idle enactments, treats them not merely as evidence of the practical improvements he alleges, but as actually constituting the changes from admitted precedent rigour, to present humanity: and there is not one, I believe, of the recent writers on the colonial side, who has not more or less relied on the same mode of defence. Yet every one of those laws was posterior in date to the parliamentary evidence; with the exception of the first Consolidation Slave Act of Jamaica, which had not come into operation till the year preceding. Besides, all the witnesses who testified so strongly from their own observation as to the then existing condition of the slaves throughout the West Indies, had quitted that country at antecedent periods.

To resort to these laws, then, in defending the humanity of the system, is to put the colonial witnesses of 1790 again out of court. To ascribe the new-born humanity to the *moral influence* of those laws is, if possible, still stronger: for supposing merely ostensible and impotent laws to have any such influence, it must of course be a work of time; yet this also has been alleged as a cause of improvement by some writers, who felt no doubt that they could not credibly ascribe to the meliorating code, in opposition to a host of proofs, any more direct and material operation.

Even the Jamaica Assembly has, in its last manufacture of what it calls evidence* as to the condition of the

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* I thus describe the examinations taken by a committee of that house in 1815, in opposition to Mr. Wilberforce's Register Bill, because I cannot consent to treat as really deserving the name of *evidence*, the statements of slave masters in defence of their own system and their own characters, collected for the purpose of defeating a measure which they thought, or professed to think, however preposterously, would be fatal to their properties or their lives.

We have already seen, and in the course of this work I shall more

slaves, resorted to this indirect cause of alleged improvements. Several of the planters whose testimony is given, asserted that the condition and general treatment of the slaves had been greatly meliorated, within the time of their own experience; and one of them, Robert William Harris, Esq. specified the following particulars, to which I request particular attention.

" As to the hours of labour, when the examinant came to " the Island the slaves were turned out full an hour before " day, and kept out as long after dark. Their breakfast was " always cooked for them, and they were allowed half an " hour to eat it, and two hours to go home to their dinner. " As the length of the days, on an average through the year " in this climate, including the twilight, is about twelve hours " and a half, so the slaves then worked twelve hours in the

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abundantly shew, the danger of listening to such self-defensive testimony, though given in this country, before the high tribunal of parliament, and in the presence of an opposing party, as well as impartial judges and auditors, and subject to the test of cross-examination, and to contradiction by other witnesses: but in these examinations, and others of a like kind transmitted from different colonies, all such checks are wanting. The judges, the examiners, the auditors, and the witnesses, are all parties to the controversy, and all on the same side; or if any of the latter appear by their descriptions to be disinterested, that appearance is not rarely deceptious; for it does not follow that because a witness is described as a military or civil officer, a lawyer or physician, he is not also a planter or owner of slaves; still less that he is not so connected with those who are, as to have nearly an equal biass. The presumption from residence is strongly the other way; nor have the examiners in any instance, to my recollection, attempted to repel that presumption, as they might have done, were it groundless, by proper questions to the witnesses themselves.

What is more important still, a witness examined in the West Indies, must not only be sincere and impartial, but have a degree of courage amounting to temerity and self-devotedness, who should dare to give any testimony on these subjects on the anti-slavery side. If such willing martyrs to the cause of truth and humanity were to be found on the spot, their characters were, doubtless, well enough known to prevent their being called as witnesses on these ex parte and extra-judicial examinations.

For these reasons, I shall certainly think it no part of my duty to state and refute such testimony; but the same considerations will intitle me to cite with the greater effect from it, any facts which, though adduced to support the colonial case, may be used for its refutation.

" twenty-four. At present the same time is allowed for " breakfast and dinner: but the slaves, *as far as examinant* " *sees*, are only required to work in the field in daylight; and " consequently they work only ten hours in the twenty-four, " and not near so hard as formerly.

" In respect to punishments, amelioration made its first " stand there. *As far as has come within examinant's observa-* " *tion*, the punishments of the present day hold no measure " with former times; and are mild and gentle both in their " nature and extent when compared with military punish " ments. The manners, habits and condition of slaves have " been greatly ameliorated since he came to the island; and, " generally speaking, the improvement has been regular and " progressive; and he considers it is to be attributed to the " operation of several concurrent causes. IN THE FIRST " PLACE, *to the legal enactments and the moral influence of the* " *consolidated slave law.* SECONDLY, to the increased hu- " manity and benevolence of the proprietors, which led them " to employ and get out people of better education, better " principles and better connections for the planting line than " were formerly employed in it. THIRDLY, to the conse- " quent disposition of all those in power to treat the slaves " with greater lenity, encouraging them to be christened, and " giving the head negroes more confidence. FOURTHLY, to " their being relieved from oppressive duties they were for- " merly subjected to, over and above the ordinary labours of " agriculture and manufacture. FIFTHLY, the progress of " improvement not having been interrupted or retarded by " the accession of new savages, *since the abolition of the slave* " *trade.*"*

Though I have cited the testimony of this long experienced and eminent planter only for the immediate purpose of further shewing how often the dates and the sources of alleged improvements have been shifted by the assemblies and their

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* Paper intitled *Further Proceedings* of the Honourable House of Assembly of Jamaica, relative to a Bill introduced into the House of Commons, &c. (Mr. Wilberforce's Register Bill). Printed by Richardson, 1816, and widely circulated by the West India Committee and agents, p. 83—84.

advocates, it will be found hereafter to have a substantive importance in the question, whether there have been any improvements at all; and will tend much to elucidate what I shall maintain to have always been, and still to be, the worst and most destructive part of the whole system, the oppressive excess of forced labour. I pledge myself to demonstrate that what is here admitted to have been its former, is far short of its present amount.

But I would at present only ask my readers to observe the dates, and the assigned causes of improvement, here alleged.

When the respectable examinant speaks of the time of his first arrival in the island, he refers to the year 1785, or somewhat near that time; probably his first knowledge of the facts he specifies was later; for he had stated himself to have resided there upwards of thirty years, and his examination is dated the 23rd of November, 1815. But supposing him to refer to a state of things not more recent than 1785, it would still synchronize with that of which the witnesses of 1790 on the colonial side gave such extremely favourable accounts; as they had for the most part quitted the West Indies several years before their testimony was given, and their accounts related to the time of their residence there. We have here, therefore, an admission, not in general terms only, but by the adduction of many particulars, that those accounts were unfounded in fact.

The first cause of improvement here assigned, brings down the former severity to a much later date; for the first Consolidation Act bears date the 6th December, 1788, and its "*moral influence*" on the feelings and manners of the society, if a real, must have been rather a distant effect. The three next, as the reader will observe, are rather consecutive effects than causes; and the last, the cessation of the African slave trade, did not come into operation till the year 1808.

Such was the new and inconsistent defence of the colonies in 1815, when the Register Bill gave rise to new investigations as to their existing interior system.

But now their note is again changed. The Consolidation Act, and the other meliorating laws, now are virtually admitted to have done nothing, either by their direct provisions or moral influence, towards the improvements in question;

for the present watchword of the party is to ascribe them to the abolition alone. Even Mr. Barclay, as we have seen, concurs with that other accredited and redoubted champion of the colonies, Mr. M'Donnel, in regarding the non-admission of "*savage Africans*, or of a rude and barbarous people," as having been necessary to clear the foundation of his alleged improvements. Even *he*, in affecting to contrast the present with the past, tells us of oppressions that existed "*twenty* " and *ten* years ago," as the strongest he could find for his purpose.

And why this last change of doctrine? Why not still ascribe the good work rather to the meliorating laws, which have had so much longer a reign? Because the immediate objects of the controversy are changed. Because the practical question *now* is, whether the meliorating code shall be extended, pursuant to the votes of Parliament and the troublesome though most humble solicitations of the crown. To hold, therefore, that such laws have been found effectual, would be much less convenient and prudent, than to maintain that the abolition has supplied reformatory principles and motives, such as have already done much and will progressively do all that justice and humanity require. Should the reader not be satisfied with this explanation, let him find if he can another.

Here let me point out, by the way, a new and glaring inconsistency. If we suppose the colonists sincere in attributing to the abolition the beneficent effects they allege, and that they really rejoice, as they affect to do, for those fruits of the measure, how shall we account for their rancorous animosity to Mr. Wilberforce? The patient might as reasonably hate and reproach the skilful physician who had healed him; or the penitent, the spiritual monitor who had turned him from his sins.

Mr. Wilberforce has been an advocate indeed for humane laws, which they allege to be no longer necessary; but if his indefatigable labours alone have made them so, the self-disparaging, and therefore honest error, should surely be more than outweighed by the actual and inestimable benefit received. That he was sincere, could not be doubted; for what man, or what angel, would not have been elated to take to himself,

if he truly could, the praise of having effectually alleviated the galling and guilty yoke of colonial bondage; as well as put an end to the slave trade! Yet, the stores of vituperative language are ransacked by every colonial press on both sides of the Atlantic, in the vain attempt to blast his well-earned laurels; and in the attempt, not vain, to gratify the malignant feelings of slave masters towards him. Even a superior, but young and inexperienced mind, one who, I hope, has a moral as well as intellectual superiority to common men, and therefore will not be ashamed to avow involuntary errors, was so seduced by the contagious sympathies, which in a very short and rapid tour through the islands he imbibed at every table of his hospitable entertainers, as not only to become on his return a volunteer apologist of their system, but to call the now confessed author of all that he thought defensible in it "the *once glorious* Mr. Wilberforce."

But I will press these remarks no further. Enough has been said to shew, that there is no presumption in favour of the recent and present pretences of improvement, either from the confidence with which they are brought forward, or the consistency of their authors, or from any apparent candour in the confessions they involve of past and once denied abuses.

It has been well said by one of my fellow-labourers, that oppression in the sugar colonies has no present tense; and I may add, that humanity has hardly a past one. Every new defence calls every former one a cheat.

And now I will answer the other question which my readers were supposed likely to put.

"Do I contend that no general improvement in the treat-"ment of slaves has yet actually taken place?" Yes; speaking of the temporal lot of the field negroes, in all the most important points, and of their spiritual interests too, with few and slight exceptions, I verily and conscientiously do. Different degrees of severity there are, and always have been, on different estates, according to the various dispositions and circumstances of their managers or owners; but in those grand articles, and main sources of ordinary oppression, under which the field negroes suffer and die; in the fatal excess of labour, and with some local and accidental exceptions, in the penury of maintenance also, the case in general is little, if at all

better than it was forty years ago. This I maintain; and this I undertake to establish.

Leaving the clear elucidation and proof of these views to the following sheets, I proceed to apprise my readers more distinctly, of the plan and limits of the work now presented to them.

The condition of the slaves in point of law, was delineated under three principal heads.

The slave laws were considered, 1st, as constituting the relation between master and slave.

2dly. As they repect questions between the slaves and persons of free condition in general.

3dly. As they affect the slave in his relation to the state, as an object of civil government and protection.*

I might now, were it my wish to give a complete account of all the practical evils and crimes that belong to the system, follow the same divisions; for in each of these relations, the slaves might be shewn to be practically and grievously oppressed. But I have already, in my account of the laws, under the second and third heads, noticed incidentally some of their practical effects; and it was professed at the outset not to be my aim in delineating this odious institution, to say all that could truly be said against it; but only so much as might suffice to shew that it is too bad to be tolerated by a Christian legislature, a moment longer than strict necessity requires.† Therefore, and for the reasons before assigned, though I may have occasion sometimes to notice, as connected with the relation to the master, evils that more directly belong to the slave's depressed and helpless situation in his relations to the free classes, and to the state itself, the practical consequences of the master's formidable power, will be the chief subject of the present book.

The law as between master and slave, was delineated by its principal canons or rules; of which I distinguished twelve,‡

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* Vol. I. p. 32. † Ibid. p. 11. ‡ Ibid. p. 18.

but it is in shewing the mischiefs which flow from the 3d, 4th, and 5th of these, and more especially the 3d, that my remaining labors will be chiefly employed: I will therefore repeat them here.

Rule 3*d*. The master is the sole arbiter of the kind, and degree, and time of labour to which the slave shall be subjected; and of the subsistence, or means of obtaining a subsistence, that shall be given in return.

Rule 4*th*. The master may imprison, beat, scourge, wound, and otherwise afflict or injure the person of his slave, at his discretion.

Rule 5*th*. These harsh powers of the master may all be exercised, not only by him in person, but by his representatives and agents of every description, and by every person, whether bond or free, who is clothed in any manner with his authority.*

In delineating the ordinary exercise of these powers, I shall confine myself to the treatment of the predial slaves, commonly called the "*field negroes*;" not only because these form by far the most numerous class, amounting probably to four-fifths of the whole enslaved population, but because it is upon them, that the slavery of the sugar colonies falls with the heaviest and most destructive pressure. *Domestics*, are likely to suffer more from the anger, the revenge, the suspicion, and other malevolent feelings of the master; with whom they are brought, much oftener than the field negroes, into personal contact and collision; but his avarice, that far wider and surer source of oppression, is opposed to the comfort, the health, and often the existence, of the predial slaves. They are on sugar plantations, as I shall shew, universally over-

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* The exceptions, and pretended exceptions, to these rules were noticed in the proper places in my former volume; and it would be tedious to repeat them here. It would be equally tedious, nor is it necessary, to notice in this place, such further exceptions as have been added by subsequent Acts of Assembly, or Orders of Council. They will properly belong to a second edition of my former volume, or "Law of Slavery," if I live to prepare one. Meantime such alterations of the law as have any material connection with my limited account of the practical system, shall be noticed in those respective divisions of my subject to which they relate.

worked, and for the most part under-fed, not because the proprietor is cruel, nor always because he is too greedy of gain, but because most proprietors are necessitous; and because all, having acquired their estates after progressive competition had pushed the exaction of forced labour to its present extent, they cannot, without great sacrifice of present income, or the protection of a general law, reduce it to such bounds as would consist with the physical or moral well-being, or generally even with the preservation, of the slaves. I do not, therefore, mean to describe or notice, unless incidentally and by way of illustration, any of the oppressions under which they suffer, except those which I hold, and have ever held, to be the most cruel and destructive, as well as the most general and inherent to the system, excess of labour, and insufficiency of maintenance; in other words, those abuses of the master's power which arise from his selfish, not his malevolent feelings.

Incidental, however, to these main topics, and inseparably connected with a fair consideration of them, is the discipline by which labour is coerced; the harsh and brutalizing nature of which greatly aggravates the ill effects of its excess, and constitutes at the same time, a third head of oppression, not less general than the two former, and springing from the same ordinary motives.

My practical delineation then, will be much narrower in its plan, though not I fear in its bulk, than my account of the Slave Laws; and shall be arranged as follows :—

1st. I will state and consider the forced labour imposed on the slaves of sugar plantations in its ordinary nature and amount; premising some remarks on human labour in the Torrid Zone in general, and subjoining a comparative view of agricultural labour in England.

2d. I will describe the means of coercion and discipline by which their labour is enforced.

3rd. I will state the ordinary treatment of the slaves in respect of food, clothing, and other necessaries provided by the master.

After which, I propose briefly to review the state of colonial slavery as thus delineated both in law and practice; and to conclude with some practical suggestions.

CHAPTER II.

OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN THE TORRID ZONE, AND THE PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF ITS EXCESS WHEN FORCIBLY EXACTED.

THE main object of slavery in the sugar colonies is the obtaining, by compulsion, the labour of negroes in the cultivation of the land.

It is maintained by the planters, that there are no other possible means by which West India produce can be raised; because Europeans, as they allege, cannot, and negroes, in a state of freedom, will not, till the soil in that climate. The former of these propositions was disputed by some early writers in the abolition controversy, who were not personally acquainted with the West Indies; and there are certainly some plausible grounds for denying that it is strictly and universally true; but it has never been controverted by me. Nor do I think that it can be fairly denied, to an extent material to the practical question for the sake of which it has been maintained; for Europeans certainly cannot work so much there in the tillage of the soil, without speedy destruction of health and life, as to make their labour in the raising of sugar a substitute that the planter can afford, while the black or coloured race, whether slaves or free, are their competitors.

On the first settlement of our oldest West Indian colonies, Europeans, I admit, were employed in the labours of the field; but they were chiefly transported convicts, or indented servants, who worked by compulsion; and at a time when sugar planting, incomparably the most laborious species of agriculture, was in its infancy, and was prosecuted to but a small extent.

The general incapacity of white men to endure such labours between the tropics, arises from two causes; the noxious

effects of long exposure to the rays of the sun; and the exhausting tendency of vigorous action in a highly heated atmosphere; by the first of which negroes seem not to be at all annoyed, and by the other in a much less degree than natives of the temperate zones. The noontide solar blaze in that climate cannot in general be sustained by our countrymen for any great length of time, though in a state of rest, without uneasy sensations, and injury to the nervous system; while to the blacks it is quite innoxious. The one, therefore, would be distressed and exhausted by such a continuance or intensity of field labour, as the other might, without injury, endure.*

But in this latter point, the difference is more in degree than in kind; for brisk and vigorous action subjects the negro, as well as the European, to a redundant perspiration, proportionate to the heat of the atmosphere in which the exertion is made; and with both, the natural effect is exhaustion of strength and spirits. The black can work much more than the white man in that burning region; but cannot, without

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* Let me not be understood for a moment, as giving any countenance here to the apologies that are made for slavery or slave trade, on the score of this physical inferiority of European labourers between the tropics. In a moral view, they are too preposterous for serious refutation. But the defence, as usual in like cases, has been extended tacitly to much iniquity that does not fall within the range even of its own bad principle. Of indoor labours, and domestic service, our free fellow subjects of this country are not less capable in the West Indies than negroes are; and at a former period, the artificers and mechanical labourers in those colonies were chiefly white men; but now, domestic service, and almost all mechanical employments, are exclusively allotted to negroes or mulattoes; and, for the most part, to slaves. Though so many of our fellow-subjects here are distressed for want of employment in various lines, and would be glad to go for it to the West Indies on easy terms, thereby relieving us in some measure from the evils of a redundant population, this resource is shut to them; while the pestilent influence of slavery on morals and manners, is needlessly and fatally, carried from the fields into the parlour, the nursery and the workshop.

It would be easy to shew that the domestic slavery of the colonies has, in its natural effects, much embittered the predial; and that the abolition of the one, would make the mitigation and progressive termination of the other, a work of great facility, and perfect safety. But this is too large and important a subject for incidental discussion.

prejudice to health, work so much as an Englishman of the same bodily strength can in his native climate. The field negro, indeed, is driven, as I shall shew, to actual exertions far exceeding, in duration at least, any that our hardiest peasants sustain in this temperate climate; but not without the most distressing and fatal effects.

Had the primeval curse equally affected the earth itself in every latitude, the natives of the Torrid Zone, slavery apart, would in this respect have felt it more than the rest of their species. The sweat of the brow, and the sufferings of the wearied labourer, would have been pre-eminently theirs. But the Creator's works abound with compensatory and equalizing expedients. The same fervent atmosphere that makes arduous long continued labour much more irksome, lessens greatly the need of it; by quickening the process of vegetation, and giving to the soil with little culture a much greater fertility than laborious tillage will impart to it in the temperate zones. Many nutritious fruits, grateful to the taste of man, and well fitted for his support, such as the plantain, the banana, the bread fruit, and the cocoa nut, are either the spontaneous growth of the soil, or when once planted, require scarcely any further toil, but yield perennially, a copious supply of food.

An attentive observer of the works of God in the animal and vegetable world, might infer *à priori* from these facts, that inferiority in the inhabitants of hot climates to ourselves in laborious activity, which they always exhibit when their native propensities are unsubdued by the yoke of private bondage; and might infer also, that such a disposition, if not carried to a vicious excess, conduces to their physical welfare. In that beautiful and deservedly popular work of Dr. Paley, his Natural Theology, he has shewn in a multitude of instances, how wonderfully seeming defects or disparities in the powers or faculties of different animals, and in the provisions made for their support and well being, are supplied or compensated by their respective positions, propensities, and habits. All are supplied with adequate means of providing for their natural wants; but without superfluity; so that the faculties and powers of a particular organization in any species of animal being given, we may generally infer corresponding and proportionate necessities; and *vice versa*, when the latter are known, we may be

led to expect an adaptation of the former, antecedently to any zoological observations of the fact. The interior cistern of the camel, for instance, might teach us that he was destined to traverse the dry deserts of Africa; and the various powers of the elephant's proboscis might be expected from the unwieldy bulk of his frame.

Man, the favourite care of Providence, even in its sublunary scheme, was destined to inhabit every region of the globe; and his reason, while a free agent, enables him amidst all the diversities of climate and situation, so to fence against their disadvantages by artificial means, as to preserve his being in them all. But as reason and foresight, have no steady or certain influence, he is guarded also by strong instinctive propensities, against a fatal departure from those habits which his local position demands. In temperate regions, he finds vigorous bodily action rather pleasant than the reverse; and though naturally prone to prefer the stimulating employments of the chace or war, to the monotonqus labours of the husbandman, he has no such strong aversion to these, as the rewards of industry in a civilised state of society will not overcome; but in the torrid zone, his instincts are very strongly on the side of rest and ease; he shrinks from continuous labour on the sultry glebe; and delights in the shade, not only for refreshment but repose.

Nor is it true, as the apologists of negro slavery now insidiously pretend, that these propensities belong to the inhabitants of hot climates only when they are in a barbarous state; and may be vanquished by the larger excitements of industry in an advanced stage of civilization. In the most polished countries of the East, the indisposition to arduous and long continued agricultural labour is notoriously great, and the industry of the free peasants is vastly inferior to that of the same classes in Europe. Even the Chinese, whose high state of civilization will not be disputed, and whose redundant population imposes on them the necessity of being industrious in the culture of their soil, form no exception to this remark. It is clear, at least, as I shall hereafter shew, that their labour was regarded as mere idleness by our planters, when put in comparison with that of slaves working under the drivers; for in Trinadad, the experiment was tried

of working their sugar estates by labourers imported from China; and its complete failure, when shewn hereafter in the proper place, will be found highly instructive.

If these general characteristics were not too notorious to be disputed, I might support them by the authority of many eminent writers; and even by that of some distinguished champions of colonial slavery; since they adduce as an apology for that odious institution, the necessity of counteracting by force, these strong natural propensities of its unfortunate subjects. They find, strange to say, a defence of the coercive whip, in the peculiar pains and privations that it imposes on those chartered libertines of nature, the natives of a tropical climate. Because, from the exuberance of the soil, they need not work hard for themselves, it is inferred, that may be justly enslaved, and whipped into hard work for the profit of others. The very bounty of God, is thus made a plea for the tyranny and cruelty of man.*

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* Lest I should be supposed here to deal unfairly with my colonial opponents, let me quote the language of one of them who is nearly one of the most recent, and seems to claim a distinguished place in point of authority among them; I mean *Major Moody*, late of the Colonial Office, in his reports as a commissioner of enquiry into the state of the captured and apprenticed Africans, printed by order of the House of Commons in 1825.

As it may be supposed a departure from my rule to quote a writer so described, it is necessary to add that he is a West Indian; not as I believe by birth; but by habits, attachments and connections. He was long resident in the sugar colonies, and for some time a proprietor and manager of estates in Demerara; and his official reports are throughout an elaborate and zealous defence of negro slavery. They are very voluminous, and abound so much with passages to my present purpose, that it is difficult to choose among them.

It would appear, from the Major's own account, that not only during his mission, but in his previous employments, it had been the great business of his life to lucubrate on what he stiles the "*philosophy of labour*," the fundamental, and almost the only distinguishable tenet of which is, that the natives of tropical climates disrelish agricultural labour too much to addict themselves to it sufficiently without compulsion; and its chief or only practical doctrine, is that slavery ought to be maintained, as a necessary mean of raising sugar for the consumption of this country. The Major seems originally to have doubted, though, perhaps, no other intelligent man ever did, of the general propensity I have mentioned; for he boasts of having

It seems to have never entered into the imaginations of these gentlemen, that feelings so strong and so general as they

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taken great pains to establish it, by enquiries in different regions of the globe.

The result, as he shews with anxious and endless iteration, is, that the agricultural labourer in the torrid zone, is strongly indisposed to steady exertion, not merely by the pain that it imposes from the heat of the atmosphere, but by the privation of greatly desired pleasures.

Speaking of the difficulty of obtaining agricultural labour from enfranchised slaves, he says: — "Though their former habits as slaves may "make them feel the pain of *steady industry* in a less degree, it is not "sufficient that they should encounter the pain of labour in the sun; they "must also be able to resist the seducing pleasures afforded by repose "in the shade — the very enjoyment which their former state of slavery "prevented their obtaining — the enjoyment sought for and prized by all "around them. By what motive," he asks, "are these men to be with-"drawn from the pleasure of repose, which has a value so much higher in "the torrid zone than in Europe? Any man may convince himself that "this enjoyment of repose is a high pleasure, by honestly examining his "own inclination for any laborious exertion in the open air, when the sun "in Europe radiates a heat measured by 80 degrees of the thermometer." —Report, 2d part, p. 55, 56 and 75, and 1st part, p. 132.

Again: "In warm climates, repose is one of the strongest desires of "men." He further observes, that this propensity is by no means the mere effect of habit, or one even the long practical controul of which will remove its powerful influence. "In the torrid zone, where steady labour "in the sun is painful from the physical influence of heat, time cannot "altogether remove the pain felt, though it prepares the bodies of some "men to endure it. No dexterity in the use of tools can diminish the "heat of the sun's rays; and at the end of forty years, as at the end of "four months, the pleasure of repose in the shade is found to be most "powerful in diminishing voluntary steady industry," &c. — Report, 2nd part, p. 77.

From these premises the Major strangely enough infers our moral right to persist in the use of slavery and the cart-whip, under the softening names, which he every where chooses to give them, of "*constraint*," "*physical force*," "*coercion*," and the like. He does not condescend, indeed, to enter into any ethical disquisitions on the subject; thinking it enough to shew that we shall otherwise be undersold in the sugar markets of Europe; for "if the capitalist in one colony," he justly argues, "raised colonial produce at a greater expence, in the end the cheapest "would drive the dearest produce out of any market wherein there may "be a competition, &c. Any nation, therefore," he adds, "adopting a "mode of local police, or interior government, which gave to the landed "colonial capitalist a moral or physical force to coerce the labour of the

describe, might possibly have been implanted by the benignant Author of our natures for kind and conservatory ends; and that the aversion to long continued field labour in the torrid zone might perhaps form no exception to that very general rule, that what is excessively irksome to our bodily sensations, is unfriendly to health and life. Yet those who insist continually on the importance of attending to "*physical* "*facts*, and sneer at the advocates of the poor Africans for neglecting them,* might have been led by experience to infer that such is the case. The striking and deplorable prevalence of disease and mortality, and the rapid decline of a race naturally strong and prolific beyond the rest of mankind, whenever those native propensities are so effectually controuled, as they are by the whip on sugar estates, might have suggested to them that nature was probably right in this instance, and relentless avarice in the wrong.

They might have adverted also to historical, as well as living facts, comparing the exuberant Indian population of the Antilles, Mexico and Peru, when first discovered by the Spaniards, with their subsequent depopulated state; and

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" Africans in return for subsistence, and a moderate scale of comforts, " would possess a decided advantage over the colonists and agricultural " capitalists of any other nation, who should adopt a mode of police or " government obtaining a smaller quantum of exertions for a much greater " rate of wages or allowances," &c.—2nd part, p. 16.

It is plain that this gentleman thinks not only that for these reasons the enfranchised African captives ought to be replaced in slavery, which is the obvious and main drift of his work, but that the slave trade ought to be restored; for he holds that our colonies cannot raise sugar on terms so cheap as those foreign countries in which the trade is still allowed. " The time is fast approaching when the proprietors will be no longer " able to produce sugar, or other articles having an exchangeable value, " in Europe, from the competition of Foreign colonies with cheaper agri- " culture, from their still carrying on the slave trade." — Report, 1st part, p. 131.

If so, his principles of political economy are evidently as applicable to the defence of slave trade as of slavery; and they are equally uncontroulled by moral considerations; unless it be more criminal to relapse into the African trade ourselves, than to reinslave its captured victims, after we have taken them from the foreign slave traders, under the pretext of making them free.

* See the same Réports of Major Moody in a hundred places.

recognizing in the tyranny of forced labour, when opposed to those native propensities, the source of the appalling contrast.*

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* Charlevoix, taking the medium of different accounts, supposes the native inhabitants of St. Domingo, when first discovered by the Spaniards, to have been about a million and a half. He agrees with all other writers in describing them as the happiest and most amiable of mankind.—Histoire de St. Domingo, liv. i.

Mr. Washington Irving, in his very valuable work recently published, A History of the Life and Voyages of Columbus, has given a very particular and highly interesting account of their character and manners; and of the commencement and early progress of that forced labour by which the avaricious tyranny of the Spaniards soon effected their entire extermination. Unfeeling, indeed, must be that mind, in which their sad story, as told in his pages, fails to excite the most lively emotions of pity and indignation.—See especially, book. ii. chap. 10; and book viii. chap. 7.

"Deep despair now fell upon the natives, when they found a perpetual "task inflicted upon them. Weak and indolent by nature, unused to "labour of any kind, and brought up in the untasked idleness of their soft "climate, and their fruitful groves, death itself seemed preferable to a life "of toil. The pleasant life of the island was at an end; the dream in the "shade by day, the slumber during the sultry noon-tide heat by the "fountain or the stream, or under the spreading palm tree, and the song, "the dance and the game in the mellow evening, when summoned to their "simple amusements by the rude Indian drum. They were now obliged "to grope, day by day, with bending bodies and anxious eye, along the "borders of their rivers, sifting the sand for the grains of gold, or to "labour in their fields beneath the fervour of a tropical sun, to raise food "for their task-masters. They sunk to sleep, weary and exhausted with "the certainty that the next day was to be but a repetition of the same toil "and suffering. Or if they occasionally indulged in their national dances, "the ballads to which they kept time were of a melancholy and plaintive "character. They spoke of the times that were past, before the white "men had introduced sorrow and slavery and weary labour among "them."

The terrible and fatal consequences are narrated by Mr. Irving with great particularity, and in a like impressive style. They resist while resistance is possible; they fly to their mountain tops and woods; but are every where pursued and slaughtered, or brought back by their remorseless and indefatigable oppressors. They perish by thousands from hunger, fatigue, and hardships of every kind; till at length opposition is effectually quelled; and they submit in despair to that cruel and murderous drudgery, or, in the style of our philosopher of labour, to that "*steady industry*," of which death is the slow, but sure result.

Modern Hayti, in its reversal of the barbarous experiment, has sufficiently taught the same important lesson; for there the depopulating power of death, and the driving whip retired together. Notwithstanding all the destruction that the most sanguinary long continued insurrectionary wars—wars waged at last for the very purpose of extermination, could effect; in spite of systematic massacre, and all that blood-hounds, and hell-hounds, could do to reduce the black population, the tide of human life has risen there again to its pristine flood mark; and promises soon to overflow. No change of those immoral habits to which our planters would ascribe the sterility and morality of their slaves, has taken place in Hayti; so, at least, they themselves would anxiously persuade us; and there is no increase in the comforts of life, as we are told on the same authority; but the driving whip is banished; forced labour is no more; and nature, restored to her rights, convicts the past slavery of murderous oppression, by the evidence of her multiplying powers.

Let me not, however, be understood to mean that the labours of the field in the torrid zone are injurious to its natives when moderated to that degree which the climate fairly demands. There is a point of muscular exertion there, as well as here, up to which men may habitually work, not only without prejudice, but with positive benefit to health; and the love of rest, like every other natural propensity, may every where be indulged to a pernicious excess. All that I would immediately deduce from these remarks is, that *immoderate* labour, in that region of the earth, is extremely noxious to the human frame, as well as pre-eminently irksome; and that repugnance to it is a salutary instinct, implanted in the mind of man by the Author of our natures, for the security of health and life.

What degree of labour may be sustained there, or in any climate, without pernicious effects, is obviously not to be ascertained theoretically by any general rule. The diversities of age and sex, and strength of constitution, and of previous habits, with their various combinations, and of local circumstances, friendly or adverse to health and strenth, are endless; and if a medium of them all could be found, experience would still be the only criterion to decide how much of labour in point of intensity and duration may consist, under ordinary

circumstances, with the physical well-being of a workman of average powers. But even the lessons of experience can furnish no rule of safe application to individuals whose exertions are forcibly constrained. The labourer himself, indeed, may be pretty surely taught, by his feelings of fatigue and exhaustion, when he has worked beyond the just measure of his strength; but his employers or observers, can rarely know with certainty, except from the destructive consequences of excess, whether his exertions have been limited by necessity, or by choice; by a just regard to self-preservation, or by indolent self-indulgence.

If the latter proposition be true, the inhumanity of exacting labour from innocent men by coercive force, imposed for the profit and at the discretion of their masters, is a plain corollary from it. The imposer of the toil, supposing him even a disinterested assessor of its amount, could not be sure that it was not excessive; and yet excess is likely to prove a very cruel, though slow paced, species of murder.

I speak here especially, with a view to such present force as the labourer cannot resist or avoid; like the cart whip in the hand of a driver. Among the gross and puerile sophisms to which the apologists of West Indian slavery are obliged to resort, they confound in their defences of the driving system, moral with physical coercion; and gravely observe that the free labourer also, is constrained to work for the subsistence of himself and family: one sufficient answer, to which, if such a miserable fallacy deserves any answer at all, is that the instinct of self-preservation is too strong to be easily subdued, either by the love of comfort or the fear of want: though it yields to present pain, or nearly impending torture. We do not find, in this industrious land, that our agricultural peasants work themselves to death for wages however high: we hear often of their distress for want of work, but never of their perishing from its excess; whereas the fact that men and women very often sicken and die from overwork on sugar plantations, is fully admitted, and quite beyond dispute.* The merciless drudgery which Major

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* This will be abundantly shewn in subsequent chapters; but lest the proposition should startle uninformed readers at the outset, I here subjoin

Moody calls the "*steady industry*" of the cane pieces, has always thinned the black population of our sugar colonies, far

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some extracts from that very important work of Dr. Collins, his "Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves in the Sugar Colonies." It is a work that I have referred to in my former volume; and shall often have to cite in the following sheets. It may be proper, therefore, to shew this author's superior claims to attention; and my right to quote as decisive authority what he states on the anti-slavery side. *They* were noticed in the first volume of this work; but as that has long been out of print, it may be useful to repeat them here.

Dr. Collins was a physician, and planter, of great eminence and experience, who had resided great part of his life in the West Indies, and was proprietor of valuable sugar estates in St. Vincent's, which he sold after retiring to this country. He wrote a pamphlet in defence of the slave trade; and to the last sided with its apologists; as appears even from the work I quote. But when Mr. Wilberforce's efforts for the abolition seemed to be finally frustrated, Dr. Collins compiled and published this work, with the humane intention of pointing out to his brother planters such abuses in the treatment of their slaves injurious to health and life, as he deemed not essential to their system, and therefore hoped they might be induced to reform.

Hence, and certainly not from any desire on his part to cast odium on a system which he had long administered, and wished to uphold, the important testimony he affords on the anti-slavery side. He could not suppress those facts of the case on which it was his object to advise; but he notices them as a friend, not an enemy, of the general system; and always with the utmost tenderness and extenuation; at least, such is his usual style when the abuse he is pointing out is one of a general kind.

From these circumstances I presume it has happened, that Dr. Collins, though often quoted against the planters, has hitherto not been treated by them, like most other writers on whose testimony their practice has been arraigned. I am not aware, at least, that *he* has been traduced and vilified, or that his authority ever has been questioned by any of their hired writers or partizans: some of them have expressly admitted it; and Mr. Hibbert, the agent for Jamaica, had the liberality and humanity to publish a new edition of the work; the same from which I now transcribe.

There are so very many passages in this work that shew the truth of the shocking proposition to which this note is annexed, that I find selection rather difficult. His strongest statements as to the fatal effects of forced labour refer to the treatment of newly imported Africans, which may be thought not strictly relevant to the existing case; but for my present purpose they are emphatically so; as the effects of the first imposition of forced labour, on men who had been previously governed by those strong native propensities described by Major Moody, will shew most clearly and

more than all other modes of oppression, and all the diseases

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fairly, how it operates on the the human frame; and if the driving whip could controul at once those powerful propensities, notwithstanding their habitual indulgence, and the resistance of oppressed nature united, its power will not be doubted to be an over-match for the latter alone.

" Experience," says Dr. Collins, " has demonstrated that a great number " of the negroes exported from the coast of Africa to the West Indies, die " within three or four years after their arrival there. I believe that the " most moderate calculation cannot rate the loss at less than one fourth on " an average. In certain cases it may not, perhaps, be so great; but in " others it is infinitely greater; whole lots of ten or twenty having very " few survivors at the end of that time," (p. 51). After noticing some medical causes of this shocking mortality, he adds, " *Labour is another, and* " *the most frequent cause of the mortality of new negroes;* some of whom " have never experienced any considerable portion of it in their own " country; and none in the manner in which they are obliged to work in " ours. The inuring them gradually to labour, so that they may undergo " it in continuation, is the primary object, and greatest difficulty, in their " seasoning; for to press for sudden and unremitted exertion, is to kill " them; *which many unfortunately do every year,*" (p. 60).

" Your new subjects," he says in another place, " will not have been " long in the field, before they will exhibit a very different appearance from " that which they had before they went there. If they have made any ex- " traordinary efforts, as many of them will do from the beginning; they " will have grown much thinner. This is the natural consequence of exer- " tion to which they have not been accustomed, and the consequent waste " by perspiration; and need not alarm you, if they are otherwise well and " in spirits; but if they are languid and dispirited, you must indulge them " either with a total remission of labour, or with such an abatement of it " as circumstances may require," (p. 78). " In the first year they get rid " of the effects of the passage and the change of situation; *but the result of* " *continued and hard labour* is most felt after a longer interval, and your eye " must be diligently directed to them for some years," (p. 81, 82).

It is not, however, among the *new negroes* alone that the destructive effects of forced labour are noticed by Dr. Collins. His chapter on labour shews throughout that this is, in truth, the grand source, not only of the cruel discipline which the slaves of the plantations are afflicted with, but of the diseases which conduct them to the hospital and the grave. He ascribes much of the mischief, indeed, to the indiscriminate manner in which the force is applied. " The exertions required of them should be " proportioned to their faculties, which vary greatly in different subjects, " some being capable of doing a great deal more than others. This seems " not to have been sufficiently attended to in the distribution of labour, as " it is usual to divide the negroes of an estate more according to their ages, " than their abilities; power being inferred from age. The consequence

of the climate, and all the vices adverse to longevity and propagation, taken together.

" of which is either that the weaker negroes must retard the stronger ones;
" or your drivers, insensible of the cause of this backwardness, or not weigh-
" ing it properly, will incessantly urge them, either with stripes or threats,
" to keep up with the others; *by which means they are overwrought and*
" *compelled to resort to the sick-house.*" (p. 175, 6).

If the reader is ill-informed enough to suppose that the driving method of coercion is not still applied in the same indiscriminate way, or is not still copiously destructive of health and life, I shall in the proper place fully prove to him the contrary; but I need offer no further evidence here, to shew that, though men do not work themselves to death by moral constraint in this country, they are to use Dr. Collins's term "*overwrought,*" and to a deathful excess, by physical force in the colonies.

CHAPTER III.

THE HIGH PROBABILITY THAT THE AMOUNT OF FORCED LABOUR ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS IS OPPRESSIVELY AND DESTRUCTIVELY EXCESSIVE, DEDUCED FROM THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF THE SYSTEM; AND CONFIRMED BY THE DECLINE OF POPULATION AMONG THE PREDIAL SLAVES.

SECTION I.—*Natural Tendencies of the System.*

THOUGH the proper medium between an indolent deficiency, and a pernicious excess of exertion, cannot be certainly ascertained by any general rule, applicable to all cases and circumstances; yet where the labourers are free, experience supplies a criterion accurate enough for ordinary use. When wages are sufficiently high, and still more when there is a competition for employment, it will be known how much labourers can commonly do, consistently with self-preservation and health, by what they actually perform. Hence a customary standard has arisen between the employers and the employed. The English farmer knows by usage, and so does the labourer too, what is a fair days' work at the different seasons of the year: the one will not be content with less, and the other will yield no more. A labourer may be too feeble from age or constitution to work up to the established standard; but then he must be content to receive less than ordinary pay.

Slavery, and its forced labour, preclude that fair and safe adjustment. There may be a customary quantum of work; but as the usage has grown from the compulsion of the masters, not the volition of the slaves, we cannot infer from the generality of its performance, that it can be easily or innox-

iously endured. If there are any securities for its moderation, they must be found in the motives of the master, not the self-conservatory feelings of the enslaved labourers themselves; yet it is by the latter alone, that the capacity for exertion can be measured, without danger of fatal mistakes.

Unhappily, the personal experience, and physical sympathies of West Indian masters, can in this case furnish no criterion whatever. Many of our English farmers have themselves held the plough, and thrown the flail; they can judge, therefore, in a great degree of the powers, and the feelings of the labourers, from their own; but as white men are strangers to the toils of the field in the West Indies, they can form no judgment from their own sensations, of what their negro slaves can, without much suffering, and abreviation of their lives endure. They know only, that the negro has a very different constitution from their own; and can sustain a degree of exertion under the solar blaze, which to themselves would be intolerable, and speedily destructive; and this naturally leads, especially under the suggestions of avarice, to much exaggeration. The potential range of capacities far surpassing our own, is likely to be magnified by the imagination, even without the bias of self-interest. Men of gigantic stature, were anciently supposed able to put armies to the rout; and to perform those wonders of muscular strength, which are ascribed to *Hercules*, and other fabulous heroes of antiquity. - The learned, in an illiterate age, were as naturally thought to be endued with preternatural powers. So, also, when the hardy strong-built negro was first brought from Africa to the new world, his masters, from the same propensity, exaggerated in their ideas his powers of enduring labour, beyond all rational bounds. Even *Las Casas* seems not to have apprehended, that avarice might over-tax the strength of this new drudge, as it had fatally done that of the less vigorous Indian. Experience, indeed, progressively proved the mistake; but under a concurrence of other circumstances adverse to health and life; and till its awful lessons were given in the cane-pieces, as well as the mines, they did not so clearly shew, that the main cause of mortality was excessive labour alone. Nor were the French, English, and Dutch settlers, among whom, that grand curse of Africa, sugar planting in

the West Indies, originated, easily convinced of an error, by which their immediate gains were promoted; and the ill effects of which their slave trade promptly repaired. The excessive estimates of the masters, therefore, as to the poor negro's capacity for labour, were left to be corrected in the sugar colonies, as in Spanish America, by long continued fearful experiment alone. The limits of his possible endurance, were found only by forcing him to that which he could not endure; as we ascertain the utmost capacity of a vessel, by filling it till it overflows.

Though every planter was left to assess the labour on his own estate at his discretion, the effect of its assessment by all, on the same general principle of taking the utmost that compulsion could obtain, was such an uniformity of practice upon almost every estate, and in every sugar colony, as upon any other premises, it would be very hard to account for. If justice, or humanity, or policy, or a provident regard to future and permanent interests, had adjusted the limits of exaction, of course the practice of forced labour would have varied so greatly in different places, and at different periods, as not to be reducible to any general customary standard.

But a customary standard there is; and one of singular uniformity in all the sugar colonies, British or foreign; as clearly appears in that which best admits of mensuration, the time employed in work. Nor has there been any variation in it, as I shall shew, in the British West Indies, at least, since the first public investigations of the subject, now near forty years ago. Whether that standard is a moderate and humane, or an oppressive and destructive one, is the most momentous question at issue between the friends, and the opponents of the system; and its close examination upon evidence, will be the chief business of the following sheets.

The distance between the conflicting general statements on this point, is of no ordinary width.—It is not a mere difference of degrees; but extends to the most opposite extremes. While it is maintained on the one side, that the slaves on sugar estates are grievously distressed, worked down, and destroyed by excessive and incessant labour, it is stoutly alleged on the other, that their work is mere pastime; and that they enjoy a superabundant share of leisure, recreation,

and repose: representations of which, sufficient specimens have been given in a former chapter.

Let us first enquire, then, which of these statements is the more likely, from the nature of the case, to be true; for in every question that involves disputed facts, it is the best preparative for rightly weighing the evidence, to determine first on admitted premises, if we can, on which side probability lies.

If the controversy turned merely on the actual quantum of work in point of *time*, such a preliminary enquiry might well be spared; for *this* I shall be able to establish by direct and irrefragable proofs to be truly enormous; and antecedently to experience, I should have thought that fact enough for my purpose; but the modes of labour, and most of the attendant circumstances, being little known, and ill conceived in Europe, the case is open in those respects to fallacious representations, of which the colonial apologists have very artfully and amply availed themselves; and I have lived to see how little impression is made in this case by the best authenticated and most undoubted facts, though demonstrative of gross oppression, upon minds biassed by self-interest, or preoccupied by favorable or extenuatory views of the colonial system, derived from the sources of prejudice to which I have before adverted.

Let me not, then, be thought either diffident of the positive proofs I have to adduce, or regardless of the reader's time, if I endeavour to dislodge these prepossessions in the present instance, by shewing that the general excess of forced labor is a highly probable imputation, and the bold pretences of liberal forbearance in that respect, utterly incredible, from the very nature of the case.

To avoid extreme terms, and put this preliminary question in the simplest form, which is the more likely, that the labour generally exacted by sugar planters from their predial slaves, should fall short of, or that it should exceed, that measure of exertion, which the latter, consistently with their well-being, can yield.

That the master's immediate self-interest, is more directly and apparently opposed to any error on the lenient, than on the oppressive side, is sufficiently plain. The planter's object is to extract wealth from the soil by the labour of his slaves; and his profits, *cæteris paribus*, must be directly proportionate

to the quantity of work they perform. To require less, therefore, than they can yield, would be a present sacrifice of the potential gain; and it is not easy to believe that such a sacrifice has been usually and generally made.

If a farmer, or manufacturer, were to say that he willingly and habitually remits to his workmen a considerable portion in point of time, or exertion, of the work he is entitled lawfully to demand from them, we should distrust his sincerity; and the assertion would be thought the more incredible, the greater the number of his workmen was known to be, and the larger the expence of labour, in proportion to the gross returns of the manufactory, or farm. But the sugar planter, who is both a farmer and manufacturer, who constantly employs a hundred or two hundred slaves, or more, and whose expences in acquiring and sustaining them, bear a very large proportion to the value of his produce, tells us that he remits much of the labour, which he might fairly exact from them; and expects to be believed!

If the English manufacturer were, by patent or otherwise, the sole maker and vendor of the article he deals in, such a statement from him, though strange, might not be quite incredible; for he might, possibly, indulge himself in a lavish liberality without any ruinous effects; raising the price of his article so as to make up for the value of the labour wastefully remitted and lost. But if there were, and had long been, a multitude of competitors in the same manufacture, for the same markets, and if competition had already produced the usual effect of reducing the returns of the business in general to the lowest average of profit for which it could be carried on, we should see that the statement involved a solecism in political economy, and could not possibly be true. His less liberal rivals must long since have driven him from the markets, and obliged him to desist.

If to avoid this obvious objection, the manufacturer should add that all his brother manufacturers, multitudinous though they were, practised the same liberality, the moral improbability would increase, as the commercial paradox was softened; and the latter, after all, would not be solved, unless he could extend the assertion to all past as well as present, and to foreign as well as British, competitors. It must always and

every where, have been the strange rule, in this branch of manufacture, to accept fewer hours, or days of labour, than the workmen had bargained and been paid for; because the economy of predecessors would otherwise have so far reduced the price of the fabric, as to have left no room for such generosity in the existing class. The market they had succeeded to could not have afforded such a sacrifice.

To the case of our planters, the same principles clearly and strongly apply; for the difference made by slavery is in this respect a difference only in form; though in other views it highly enhances the improbability of what they allege. If we substitute for the manufacturer's right by contract to a given portion of labour, the planters' power and legal right to exact from the slaves all the labour they can possibly be compelled to yield, the two cases will be found to be the same; and it will be as difficult, upon the most certain principles of political economy, to believe that any needless abatement is generally made in the latter case to the slaves, as that in the oldest and best contested branches of manufacture at Birmingham, or Manchester, the masters having a right by contract to six days' labour in the week, and ten hours in each day, are content with five and nine; or pay for piece-work twenty per cent. more than the workmen have contracted to accept.

Though our planters allege to the people of England, that the asserted liberality is general, or has few exceptions in the British West Indies, I do not recollect that any of them allow, and some of them strongly deny, the same liberality to their competitors in the foreign colonies: yet upon indisputable principles, applied as we have seen, by Major Moody to this identical case,* the more rigid economies of those foreign competitors, must have imposed on the British planter, a necessity of departing from it, and exacting a full measure of work from their slaves, in order that they might meet their rivals on equal terms in the foreign European markets.

The same, though not so obviously, must have been the effect of a full or extreme exaction of work by the predecessors of our present planters in the English colonies, and those

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* See supra, p. 50.

from whom they have bought their estates; "not so obviously," only because it is not sufficiently known and considered, that sugar plantations themselves are commercial commodities, which pass with great frequency from hand to hand, at prices governed by the profits they have been recently known to yield. Consequently the thrift of the sellers, in pushing the faculties of the slaves to the utmost, must impose an economical necessity on the buyers, of practising a like frugality. The gang that produced a hundred hogsheads of sugar, by whatever severity of labour, must be made to produce as much still; or the investment, though made at a fair price, will turn to a loss. Now, that the liberality in question did not heretofore exist, and that on the contrary an undue exaction of labour prevailed in our colonies, I have shewn to be no longer in dispute.

I shall demonstrate, however, to my readers hereafter by direct evidence, that if labour was excessive, twenty or even forty years ago, it is so still. I shall shew that in this respect at least, there is no general change for the better.* But I am reasoning now *à priori*, on premises which my an-

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* Mr. *Barclay*, in his enumeration of improvements, and contrast of the past with the present, has alleged no such change.

Mr. *Dwarris*, in a pamphlet published by him, is one of the most strenuous assertors of recent ameliorations in the treatment of the slaves in the sugar colonies; and he undertakes, in answer to a supposed question, to specify in what they consist; but this Jamaica planter (for such I understand he is, though a commissioner lately delegated by government to enquire into subjects like these) does not insert in his catalogue any mitigations of labour; though he looks back over a period of thirty years, to find other changes for his purpose. (The West Indian question by Mr. Dwarris, p. 12 and 14).

As this gentleman does me the honour to refer to accountslong since given by me; and asks triumphantly, "does my reasonable man believe the pre-
"sent condition of the islands to resemble the pictures there drawn, in any
"the slightest degree?" I answer, that the likeness in every important feature is as correct as ever; and that it was denied as confidently by his brother planters, when first taken, and in reference to the very time when the living subject was under my eyes. I answer further, that in many features of the system as now delineated by himself, I find the very same characteristic deformities, though much softened in the colouring by a complimentary artist; and lastly, that many connoisseurs, whose acquaintance with the subject is as recent as his own, and much more familiar, find none of the dissimilitude he complains of.

tagonists cannot dispute. Let them reconcile them, how they can, with the principles I have adduced, and with credibility, not merely the disuse of such inordinate exactions of labour as were found destructive to the master's property in his slaves; but a gratuitous remission of his right to exact as much work as he thinks compatible with their well-being; and a degree of liberality and self-denial on his part, that is asserted to leave them a superfluous portion of time, for recreation, and the improvement of their own condition.

To estimate better the credit due to such assertions, let us take a nearer view of that seductive immediate interest which a planter has in extending, or at least not retrenching, the labours of his slaves.

His profits, as I before remarked, must be in proportion to the work they perform. It may be otherwise with the employer of free labourers; for their wages may advance or decline with the measure of their exertions; but the only wages given by the masters of slaves, are food, and other articles necessary for their support; the amount of which does not depend on the quantum or value of the work, but on their wants alone. It is admitted indeed, nay often brought forward in argument by the planters, that when they themselves are distressed, their slaves are very badly sustained; but it has never to my knowledge been pretended, that their ordinary allowances are raised, when the crops are either in quantity or value increased.

Neither is that far larger cost of slave labour, the price paid for the power of enforcing it; in other words, the interest on the capital invested in the purchase of the slaves, lessened by any diminution of the work. It may be hereafter enhanced indeed, I admit, by the effects of any such excess as shortens the lives of the workmen; and this may be supposed to form a motive of forbearance, the value of which I shall soon proceed to examine; but we are now considering the force of the motive of a certain and immediate self-interest, in order to poise it fairly afterwards, against that of a provident regard to distant and doubtful consequences.

That almost all the other ordinary charges of this farmer and manufacturer, such as interest on the value of the land, the works and buildings, salaries of managers, &c. would not be

lessened by any reduction of the quantity of work exacted from a given number of slaves, is sufficiently obvious. Therefore as the difference between the collective amount of all charges, and the value of the gross produce, constitutes the planter's profit; and as the quantity of the produce *cæteris paribus*, must be in proportion to the labour obtained, the present gain from any potential augmentation of labour, is manifestly equal to the entire value of the additional produce raised by it. It is so much added, not merely to the gross, but to the clear nett returns, of the estate.

To make this clearer, let it be supposed that from an estate which has cost, including the works, buildings, slaves and stock, 20,000*l.*, a hundred hogsheads of sugar are annually produced, by a degree of labour not amounting to excess; and that they yield, on the balance of the consignee's accounts, 20*l.* per hogshead, or 2,000*l.* in all, which is 10*l.* per cent. on the capital employed, and that the planter's annual expenditure is 1,200*l.*, or 6*l.* per cent. so as to leave him a profit of 4*l.* per cent. or 800*l.* as a clear return on his capital.*

It is manifest, that if, by encreasing the labour of the slaves, the estate can be made to produce one fourth more, or 125 hogsheads, the augmentation of the balance of nett proceeds in the consignee's accounts, will be 500*l.*, making 2,500*l.* in all, or 12½ per cent. on the capital, liable only to the same deduction of 1,200*l.* for annual expenditure, and leaving the planter 1,300*l.*, being a clear return of 6½ instead of 4 per cent. The increment of labour, and of gross value, is but one fourth, while that of the planter's profit is five-eighths, of the former amount; and the temptation to excess, is the power of raising his clear income from 800*l.* to 1,300*l.* per annum.

I am far from meaning to convey the idea that an aug-

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* Though these hypothetical data may be wide of the truth without affecting the argument, most of them were stated, on high colonial authority to be the actual averages of capital, charges and returns in ordinary times.—See the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on the Commercial state of the West Indies, 1807.

mentation of labour by one fourth part, is *now* within the power of the planters. It has long since ceased to be possible to increase its ordinary quantum in any very material degree; as I shall ere long, I trust, fully satisfy my readers. But I am reasoning here, against those who hold the contrary, affirming, that the slaves still have much time and potential exertion to spare.

Let us, however, apply the same calculations, on the same data, to the case of a planter, who, thinking the ordinary standard of labour excessive, should *lessen* it by one-fourth part; throwing out so much of the cane land, before under the hoe, as would reduce his average crop from 100 hogsheads to 75. His nett proceeds would then be reduced to 1500*l.*, giving a surplus of no more than 300*l.* beyond his annual expenditure, or a return of only 1½ per cent. on his capital.

I am not unaware of what an enemy to reformation may be here disposed to remark. Upon these premises, he may say, the planter cannot materially reduce the labour of his slaves without ruinous consequences, unless they are indemnified by the public. But neither can they, nor do they, proceed in their present course, without meeting those consequences as certainly and almost as generally, though by other and guilty means; and perhaps by a slower and intermitting process. Ruin, as I have more than once before publicly remarked and proved, is the natural lot of those whose entire capital is invested in sugar estates, and whose solvency depends on their returns. There are individual exceptions; and pretty numerous periodical ones in particular colonies, from temporary causes; but such is the ordinary case; and I could name islands in which, at the present moment, ruin is so universal, that it is difficult to name an estate (in a certain island I am credibly informed not one is to be found) that is not in the possession of creditors, or receivers appointed for their use.

Nor was the case, in a general view, ever materially different. If any man doubt it, let him examine the colonial authorities referred to in the appendix to my former volume. Let him read, for instance, the reports and petitions of the Jamaica Assembly, there extracted, embracing a period of near

50 years, from 1772 to 1811. What stronger pictures of comprehensive and perennial ruin than they contain can be imagined! Reasonably did the honourable assembly say in one of them, that "*a faithful detail would have the appearance* "*of a frightful caricature.*"

If the general ruin of the sugar planters can fairly be alleged to form a claim on the mother country for indemnity, the claim is already irresistibly strong; and if the evil being imputable to her, is a necessary concurrent ground, we cannot deny its existence. More justly might she be charged with compensation for having so long tolerated and maintained an iniquitous and ruinous system, than for attempting to reform it. Besides, are not the people of this country already paying the smart money with a lavish hand? What else is the high price extorted from them as consumers of sugar, for the benefit of the planters, and through their parliamentary influence alone, by a barefaced monopoly, after all their former pretences of reciprocity have ceased? But I have inadvertently broken in upon a subject that more properly belongs to a future division of my work; my present business is with the causes and virulence of the disease; not with the means, or the price of its cure.

If these views of the subject do not make it, in the highest degree, probable to my readers, that the ordinary exaction of forced labour is not abstemious, but excessive; it must be because, perhaps, they look to the master's permanent interests, in the health and longevity of his slaves, and in the maintaining of their numbers by native increase, as a counterpoise to the present temptation; or else because, perhaps, they rely upon his humanity.

As to the favourable presumption deduced from the permanent interests of the master, it is a consideration which the apologists of slavery have been in the constant habit of adducing, and relying on for near forty years; though the argument has a hundred times been answered, by irresistible appeals both to reason and experience. Never was it more speciously advanced, or more confidently insisted upon, than during the twenty years of controversy on the slave trade; a period now abandoned to us, as one of indefensible rigour

and neglect; and when a provident attention to the preservation of the slaves was confessedly yet unborn.*

As to the new motive for sparing them, arising from the abolition, which my opponents now artfully, though most inconsistently, allege to have given birth to humane improvements, it could be new only in its degree; and in that respect even its novelty was small; for there never was a time in which the destruction of the slaves by excessive labour and other oppressions did not manifestly tend to the future ruin of the planter. The African slave-market was proverbially the grave of his fortune and his solvency. All the colonial witnesses and writers, before the abolition, strongly attested this truth; and it was one of the very few points in which they were both unanimous and sincere. Why, then, did not planters, at that time, generally use proper means for the preservation of their gangs? For causes that equally exist at the present day; because they were then, as now, for the most part men in needy and embarrassed circumstances, who could not make the present sacrifices necessary to that end, especially that first and most essential one, a diminution of forced labour, without immediate or speedy ruin. It was because they preferred future, to present, and contingent, as they hoped it was, to certain evil; because also, then as now, proprietors in better circumstances were in general non-residents, and left the management of their estates implicitly to men who had no permanent interest in the preservation of the slaves, but a present and highly influential interest in the magnitude of the crops, and consequently in the amount of the labour; lastly, it was because absent proprietors were then, as now, easily deceived, and resident ones not rarely deceived themselves, in respect of the true causes of mortality and sterility among the slaves; and the proper means of correcting those evils.

But let us look for a moment at the general nature of the boasted security for good treatment in the prudent regard to self-interest, even by independent and well-informed owners.

Is it an ordinary feature of human character, to resist pre-

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* See p. 14 to 27, supra.

sent temptation, from a provident and adequate estimate, of the distant evil, that may ensue from yielding to it? In other words, are prudence and self-denial more common than the opposite defects? and if we can justly thus compliment human nature in general, can we fairly ascribe the same characteristics to the gentlemen of our West India islands? Many of their own body, and many of their eulogists, would contradict us if we did. Their general proneness to indulge when here, in expences they can ill afford, whether we call it, with their friends, spirit and generosity, or with their censors, imprudence and extravagance, is quite proverbial; and in no part of the earth is the transition from opulence, to indigence and ruin, a twentieth part so common as it confessedly is among the proprietors of the sugar colonies.

As to the excitement of the resident planters to the improvement of their present incomes, by pushing their cultute of exportable produce to the utmost, what objects can be more potently attractive? They are not only the exchange of embarrassment for ease, and poverty for wealth; but of sickness perhaps, and danger, from a lethiferous climate, for health and safety in their native land; and above all, of the multiplied discomforts, and privations of a residence in the West Indies, for luxurious enjoyments in England.

Many of them have been educated, and spent the most interesting part of their lives in this country; and what is more natural, than that they should be eager to return to it, and, impatient of that exile, which the present insufficiency of their crops to keep down the interest of their debts, and to yield a surplus for the expences of a residence here, alone imposes on them? How intolerable to be confined to a West India Island, where the pleasures of the field and chase are unknown, and almost every elegant public amusement as much so; where there is no theatre for ambition, or literary emulation, and where the pleasures of social intercourse are coarse and tasteless, when compared with those of polished society in England! Even the pure and tranquil enjoyments of family affection, are often cruelly cut off, or painfully abridged; for he must be a selfish or very improvident parent, who does not rather part with his children, than deny them the benefit of European education, and expose

them in their early years, to the corrupting influence of domestic slavery. Under what possible circumstances, then, can the immediate increase of income, though at the expence of future probable loss, have a more seductive influence on the human mind, than on the generality of planters? The youthful lover, who might obtain by it the hand of his mistress, the slave who might purchase his freedom, if not a *field negro*, could hardly have stronger inducements.

Yet if my opponents speak truth, all these dangerous temptations to an undue exaction of forced labour, are perfectly innoxious to the slaves; and have served only to signalize the self-denial and generosity of the planters. Instead of competition having raised the standard, as the opponents of the system maintain it has, up to and beyond the maximum of innoxious endurance, it falls short we are told of a proper medium: leaving to the enslaved labourers a superfluity of rest, leisure, and recreation; nay, time enough for their own use to enrich them by voluntary industry, whenever they are not too idly disposed so to employ it; or even to pay for their freedom. "*The great mass of planters,*" though consigned, as Mr. Bryan Edwards says, "*to unremitting drudgery* "*in the colonies,*" have been so abstinent, and generous, as to forego, even a reasonable use of their only means of extrication, or relief; abandoning a large surplus of disposable labour, merely that the slaves might be idle, and rich if they pleased; while their unfortunate masters were poor, and embarrassed, and pining in consequence of their immediate necessities, in a painful, and life-shortening exile!!!

Let me not be understood as imputing to the planters in general, that, without the impulse of urgent necessity, they wilfully and consciously overwork the slaves, to a degree imcompatible with their preservation. Many proprietors, I doubt not, non-resident ones especially, are impressed with an opinion, that the ordinary long-established standard of forced labour, is not more than their slaves, if properly treated in other respects, can innoxiously sustain. This error indeed, may seem strange; considering how long, and how decisively, a declining population, under circumstances naturally the most favourable to its increase, has attested the reverse. But unhappily, as disease and death produced by excess of labour, have no peculiar or dis-

tinctive symptoms to indicate their source; the sickliness, and sterility of a gang are easily ascribed by the attorney or manager, and even perhaps by the resident proprietor himself, to some natural or unavoidable causes; and every death, when accounted for, is attributed to some common disease; though in fact that disease was but one of the many morbid forms in which a constitution worn out by long continued fatigue and exhaustion ultimately sinks.*

That the diseases of the field negroes are for the most part those of debility, almost every authority on the subject will be found to attest; but the dropsy, or the diarrhœa, &c., not the predisposing weakness induced by the driving-whip, are the concluding maladies that account for the loss in the plantation bills of mortality.

If the pre-eminent loss of life, among the slaves of a particular estate, attracts attention from its absent owner, and leads to enquiry, there are always specious explanations at hand. The situation is unhealthy; epidemics have prevailed; the negroes are vicious in their habits; or they are given to dirt-eating, and obia, &c.; whereas the neighbours often could tell a different tale; namely, that from the inadequacy of the numbers, to the extent of the lands in cultivation, or other causes, the slaves had been worked harder than is usual, and treated, perhaps, in other respects, with a severity exceeding the ordinary standard.

Much, I admit, cannot well be added to that standard as to time of labour; but some differences there are, as I shall hereafter shew; *e. g.* in the relays of night work; and competition having pushed up the general exaction of labour to its maximum of long endurance by ordinary frames, a small addition is naturally attended with very bad

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* See Dr. Collins's Practical Rules, in various places. In page 18, for example, he says, "The attornies or managers unfortunately have an in- "terest, not only distinct from, but destructive of that of the planters. The "character of a manager is generally deduced from the quantity of produce "which he extracts from the estate, though *the loss sustained by the mor- "tality of the slaves, in consequence of his undue exertions*, is sometimes con- "siderable enough to exhaust the whole amount of his produce. In such "cases the credit of the crops is appropriated to those who direct the es- "tates, while the *destruction is charged upon* PROVIDENCE."

and fatal effects ; especially among the feebler and less healthy individuals of the gang. When the boat swims already gunwale-deep, an additional pound may sink it.

The extraordinary sickness and mortality, that often distinguish particular estates, are not, however, simply the effects of such an additional pressure on the gangs at large, as the ordinary standard will admit of, and the necessities of the owners may demand ; but of many consequential evils, which I shall have to notice, exemplify, and prove hereafter, as fruits of the general excess of forced labour; and still more of any aggravation, however small, which the slaves have not before expeperienced. It disheartens the feeble, it excites murmurs, and sometimes contumacy, among the strong; it multiplies desertions, and punishments, and those distressing and difficult questions, which every manager has to decide almost every day in the cases of individuals, who have been absent at the driver's muster, or remiss in some appointed task, and who allege sickness or weakness as their excuse, or as a plea for being admitted into the sick house, instead of being sent into the field.

I refer to an Appendix to this part of my work, as furnishing a well authenticated and graphic illustration of these remarks.

But these causes of mortality, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are little known to most proprietors on this side of the Atlantic; and when stated to them by anti-slavery writers, they oppose to the information incredulity as willing as that of a patient to his surgeon, who tells him, in contradiction to the assurances of self-interested quacks, that his case requires a painful operation. If they obtain from their agents in the colonies, periodical returns of the births and deaths on their estates (which is more than lately was, or perhaps yet is usually required) and an alarming decrease is found, they rely, for information as to its causes, upon their attornies or managers; who are not likely to impeach the general practice, and still less their own particular agency, by pointing out excess of labour as the true source of the evil.

To resident proprietors, the true causes by which the black population is kept down, cannot without wilful self-deception

be unknown; but I have shewn that from the circumstances they for the most part stand in, the remedy is one which they cannot apply, without consequences more formidable than the progressive reduction of their gangs; and consequently, that there is no good security in their sense of self-interest, against their over-working their slaves. Is there a better, then, in the other principle, which I supposed some of my readers might rely on, that of humanity towards those unfortunate and helpless dependents.

To those good-natured, but unreflecting readers, who may suppose humane feelings not to be obtunded by the exercise of a slave-master's discipline, and to be an overmatch for his sense of self-interest in economical modes of oppression; I will not say, wait till you are possessed of the facts and demonstrations that I have to submit to you in the following chapters of this work; for I am now reasoning only on premises already established and undenied; nor will I refer them to any of the numerous cases of recent occurrence attested by official authority, which manifest a state of general feeling on these subjects, among the resident colonists, inconsistent with the clearest dictates of humanity and mercy; but I will ask, where was this humanity, when the barbarous laws, which I have delineated in my former volume, were framed? and where was the practice of it during the prevalence of the slave trade? Surely, it could have had little place in the breasts of men, who not only reconciled themselves to all the horrors of that cruel traffic, including those of the middle passage, many of which were daily exhibited to their view; but, to the last, pertinaciously opposed its abolition.*

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* Among all the bold violations of notorious truth by which the cause of slavery, or any other cause, has been defended, I know of none so audacious and extravagant, as the assertions recently put forth, that the colonies were averse to the African trade; and were compelled by the mother country to adhere to it.

True it is, that among the numberless instances in which, at various periods, they have flown in the face of the mother country, and upbraided her with the benefits her commerce was supposed to receive from them, whenever they had a point to gain from her, they have been able to find two very ancient cases; in one of which it was represented by one colony on the North American continent, and in another by Jamaica, that they were

Nor did this humanity suffice to avert from the poor African victims, the very species of oppression now under consideration, when purchased by the British planters; for they were subjected immediately to a *seasoning*, as it is called, by which it is admitted, that at least one-fourth, or according to some colonial writers, more than one-half, of their number perished. And what was this tremendous *seasoning?* *Doctor Collins* has furnished us with an answer to that question.† It was the very abuse, respecting the probability of which, we are now enquiring; the forcing them by the whip, to undergo an excess of labour, for their slow training to which, avarice would not wait; and which their nature could not sustain. The humanity of the planters, in moderating the general standard for the seasoned or native slave, if moderate it was, must, to be sure, have been strangely capricious, and inconsistent. They spared not the poor newly-imported Africans, in the exaction of labour, when they were least able to bear it; unmoved by compassion for their recent sufferings, and painful reverse of habits; undeterred even by a consequent frightful mortality, averaging at least twenty-five per cent., among men and women in the prime of life; and often much exceeding that rate. Can we then imagine, that when use had made such oppression less intolerable, or less destructive, at least to the hardier survivors, these same masters sacrificed their own present interests to humanity; and staying the hands of the drivers, formed the standard of labour for seasoned slaves within limits which mercy and moderation prescribed!

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injured by the slave trade. They well knew there was no danger of the mother country taking them at their word, and renouncing it; nor did they profess to be influenced by humanity, or any other moral consideration. But from the first proposal of the abolition, till that measure, twenty years after, took place, the West India colonies loaded the tables of parliament with petitions and manifestoes against that righteous reformation; nor ceased even then to remonstrate strongly against it, as invasive of their rights, and destructive of their property.

The prolongation of that grand national iniquity, from 1788 to 1807, was effected solely almost by the zealous and potent efforts of the sugar colonies; and Jamaica was foremost in the too successful contest. Do they suppose, then, that the people of England have lost their memories, and that the records of parliament are destroyed?

† See the extract from this work, supra, p. 55.

If the reader can believe this, his credulity must be invincible; and he may find no difficulty in believing further, that Dr. Collins, that well-informed apologist of himself and his brother planters, has foully, and insidiously belied them. It may be in vain therefore, perhaps, that I have shewn, on his authority, in respect of native or seasoned slaves also, that excess of labour with its avariciously indiscriminate exaction, have been the causes of their destruction.*

But here another staggering objection will occur; for if humanity has moderated the quantum of labour, in which the master's urgent immediate interests are directly opposed to his forbearance, how comes it not to have been active also in respect of the means and manner of enforcing it, in which the opposition of his interest seems less direct and powerful? Can any man, who contemplates the barbarities of the driving method, as depicted by Dr. Collins,† or even in its obvious and essential character, doubt of its unavoidable oppression, and cruelty? The planter's humanity, if humane he be, is consigned to the keeping of his drivers, who are negro slaves, and therefore, as the colonists assert, unfeeling tyrants to each other; and a method is at the same time prescribed to them, which makes humane discrimination, not merely an extremely difficult, but quite impracticable task.

It would be a very inadequate reply in support of the favourable presumption I am repelling, to say, that these views are partly retrospective, as relating to a time when the slave-trade was in use; for by what moral charter are the colonists of the present day exempted from the obdurating influence that the administration of the same interior system had on their predecessors? and where is there any evidence of an altered spirit in their reception of the humane suggestions so much of late pressed upon them by the British government and legislature? Besides, the question relates to a standard of customary labour established long before the abolition; and I trust

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* See the same note, p. 55, 56.

† Ibid. The description of Dr. Collins as strikingly confirms that which I gave in the Crisis of the Sugar Colonies, and have copied in my former volume, much though its veracity was disputed, as if it had been written for that very purpose.

it has been shewn that if then carried too high, there is the strongest ground for presuming that it has not since been reduced. That presumption, however, shall soon be confirmed by direct and positive proof.

Section II. — *Decline of Population among the Slaves on Sugar Estates.*

Let us next enquire, whether the same probability is not strongly fortified by the undisputed, and indisputable fact, that among the field negroes, or common working-slaves, *on* sugar plantations, there always has been, and still is, a lamentable loss of life, such as the reproductive powers of nature does not fully repair.

The best criterion of the good or bad condition of the labouring classes in any country, may be found in the increase or decline of their numbers. This I presume is a proposition, which no man of tolerable information will deny: but it is the most decisive, when the result is on the unfavourable side. Such is the superfecundity of the human species, more especially among the tillers of the soil, that a rapid increase of population may consist with very considerable hardships, and privations; as I fear is too much the case, in many parts of England at this period: but that their condition is extremely bad, may with certainty be inferred, when the reproductive powers of nature are so far subdued, though in a climate propitious to their constitutions, that their numbers greatly decline.

Emigrations, general famines, or destructive wars, may indeed form exceptions to the rule; but from these causes of depopulation, the slaves in our sugar colonies are pre-eminently exempt. They are restrained from voluntary emigration; and are now protected by law, as before the abolition they were by pretty general practice, from compulsory removal; they have no mitary service to perform, except on a minute scale, and on very rare occasions: nor has any general famine been alleged to have occurred in any colony, during a long series of years. Yet the decline of numbers, among the predial slaves, has always been deplorably great; and still exceeds any measure of the same calamity, that is elsewhere to be found, under or-

dinary circumstances, in the history of mankind. In the last six years, comprised in the official returns laid before parliament, viz. from 1818, to 1824, the loss amounted to 3 per cent.*

But these general returns furnish a very inadequate view of the loss among the common field negroes; because they include the domestics of every description, the slaves employed in various occupations in the towns and ports, and the tradesmen or artificers and head-negroes on the plantations, who are neither driven, nor overworked, and among whom it is notorious, the domestics especially, there is much longevity, and a very considerable native increase.† A discrimination in the returns, between these different descriptions of slaves would be highly interesting and important.

That the loss of numbers is pre-eminently great or exclusively found among the field-negroes does not necessarily prove, indeed, that excess of labour, is the depopulating cause. Their condition and treatment may be, in other respects, bad and destructive; but if the same calamity occurs only in the sugar colonies, where forced labour is confessedly the most severe, and is there proportionate to the degrees in which sugar is raised; if there is no decline, but on the contrary an increase in the slave population, under

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* I refer, not for authority, but for detail and computation, to a statistical table, extracted from those public returns in the *Anti-slavery Monthly Reporter*, No. 26, for July, 1827, in order that any reader who doubts the accuracy of this general result, or any opponent who denies it, may be enabled to detect and expose any error in the arithmetic or official data. The waste of life is evidently in a larger proportion, by all the amount of that increase which should have been made by births, within the same period: and estimating this only by the rate of increase in the slaves of the United States, as stated from authentic public documents in the same paper, the loss in six years may be said to be more that 18 per cent., or 3 per cent. per annum, amounting in number to 145,331. See also the Anti-Slavery Reporter, No. 27, p. 52.

† "Domestic negroes," says Dr. Collins, "who undergo no more "drudgery than household duties require, and are supplied with com- "petent food and clothing, are as healthy and prolific, and live as long "as any other class of people in the West Indies." — Practical Rules, p. 19.

the same, or more unfavourable circumstances, wherever that article is not cultivated, and labour consequently is less severe; and if, where there is no forced labour at all, the same race, in the same climate, multiply with great rapidity,* surely we must in sound reasoning ascribe the calamity to the one peculiar cause.

Now, that such are the facts of the case has been often asserted by the public opponents of slavery; and never, to my knowledge, denied by its apologists; and has been demonstrated by evidence of the most authoritative kind. In colonies where sugar is not cultivated, as, for instance, in the Bahamas, the slaves are found to have a great native increase; the same, though in a less degree, is the case in the sugar colonies themselves, on cotton estates; and everywhere, to a very considerable extent, among domestic slaves. In the United States of America, the increase in the slave population is from to 2 to 2½ per cent. per annum, though slavery, in point of law, and in practice too, the article of labour excepted, is not less severe than in our own sugar colonies; and though the climate is certainly much less favourable to African constitutions.

It may be doubted, whether the native increase among the slaves in that country, is less than among its free inhabitants; for the ratio of increase in the general population of the United States appears, by a decennial census, to be very regularly about three per cent. per annum, comprising all classes,† and if the increase of the free exceeds, by a half per cent. or somewhat more, that of the slaves, the very large influx of the former from foreign countres, together with manumissions of the latter, may well account for the difference.

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* The existence of all the phenomena here mentioned, are shewn from official authorities in the Anti-Slavery Reporters last cited, and in No. 31, p. 155.

† See statistical accounts quoted in the Quarterly Review for January, 1828, p. 264. I am sorry to say that I might cite this very eminent periodical work *as evidence*, were it necessary, without infringing my general rule. See also the striking facts and observations in the Edinburgh Review for June, 1829, p. 497, 8.

The observation tends strongly to shew the great natural fecundity of the African race, when unsubdued by a pernicious excess of labour; for that the state of slavery is, even without this destructive species of oppression, unfriendly to the multiplication of our species, cannot admit of a doubt. I have already noticed the case of Hayti, where forced labour exists no more; and where a mortality not less dreadful than the greatest that ever prevailed in our own islands, existed while it was a flourishing sugar colony. Such, there, has been the rapid increase of the black population, that its amount, by the best authenticated estimates, has been nearly doubled, in less than thirty years.

But a contrast still more instructive and decisive, if possible, and to which I request special attention, may be found in Trinidad; and is attested by an official document transmitted by the Council of that Island, through the Governor; being an extract from the Council's Minutes, of the examinations taken by them, for the purpose of supporting their opposition to the progressive manumission of slaves, on the ground of forced labour being necessary for the cultivation of their estates. It may surprise most of my readers, perhaps, that in this paper (printed by order of the House of Commons of the 14th of June, 1827) we find the following facts:

Between November 1815 and January 1821, at different periods, 774 negroes were brought into that island, which had been rescued from slavery, partly by the seizure of slave ships, under the abolition acts; but chiefly by running away from their masters in the United States, and taking refuge on board our ships of war, during our hostilities with that country; which they did on the British admiral's invitation, and under his promise of protection and freedom.

The liberty given to them at Trinidad, was by no means perfect. They were placed under the protection of an officer appointed by government; a planter of the island, and who had been habituated to the practice of slavery on his own estate during two-and-twenty years; and such were his powers of restraint and discipline, that an uninformed reader might be at a loss to distinguish their state clearly from that of the slaves around them. In fact, its main distinction, but an all

important one, was that they were not *driven*, or forcibly compelled to work, for the profit of a master, and at his discretion; but worked for their own benefit only; though restrained from idleness and vagrancy, by a discipline sufficiently strict.

What was the result?—In the close of 1824, or by the 1st of February, 1825, *native increase was found to have added to their number* 147.—(See the parliamentary paper referred to, p. 2 and 30). What was the sad reverse, during the same period, and what is it still, with the slaves driven to their work, in the same island? A loss, as appears by the latest official returns, of *two and three quarters per cent per annum!!!*

In what way can our planters defend their system against all these damning facts? Their old plea was a disparity between the sexes; but it was not true, generally speaking, when alleged; and it has since been proved by official returns, that in the old colonies the female slaves have for many years rather exceeded the males. Even in Trinidad, the inequality is very small; but among the free negroes there, whose progress in population I have contrasted with the shocking decline among the slaves, the disproportion of sexes was on the contrary extremely great; and had been still greater. There were, by the protector's statement, in December, 1824, no less than 350 men to 160 women; and till 1817 the case must have been still worse; for 63 women were then added; and there had been no subsequent addition of males, (same paper, p. 5 and 2). The result is, from these circumstances, the more striking and decisive. No possible experiment could more clearly demonstrate the murderous effects of excessive forced labour on sugar estates, or the falsehood of every plea that ascribes them to any other cause than this; with the concurrent oppressions to which that abuse gives rise. The American refugees brought with them, no doubt, to Trinidad, all the vices of slavery; and the liberated Africans, all those bad habits and propensities, which have borne the blame of disease and death, and sterility in many a West Indian apology; but they were not driven; and they were not overworked.

I will here conclude these preliminary views; and I desire, after all, to take nothing by them in the judgment of my

readers, beyond the preparing their minds for a fair examination of the evidence, as to the actual, and very lamentable case, which I shall now proceed to open. Whatever prepossessions they may have formed in favour of colonial proprietors, from friendship, connection, or specious private representations, enough, I trust, has been said to prevent their rejecting at the outset, as incredible, those revolting truths, which it is my painful duty to unfold.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACTUAL ORDINARY DETAILS, AND GENERAL AMOUNT IN POINT OF TIME OF FORCED LABOUR ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS PARTICULARLY STATED AND PROVED; AND ITS CRUEL EXCESS DEMONSTRATED.

SECTION I.—*Introductory Remarks and Divisions of the Subject of this Chapter.*

LABOUR may be excessive, either in point of duration or intensity. It may occupy too large a portion of the labourer's time; leaving him intervals too short for reasonable refreshment and repose; or it may, in the degree of immediate muscular exertion, be too arduous and severe. In both these modes, the field negroes on sugar plantations are cruelly and destructively overworked.

The degree of intensity of labour, is obviously not susceptible of such direct definition and proof as its duration; because we have no definite standard or scale whereby to measure muscular exertion.

An actual beholder may perceive that a man is working hard, or the reverse; but has no means by which he can clearly prove the fact to others; still less any terms by which he can define the positive degree of energy or languor. To convey any accurate conception of it, he must resort to the effects produced, in a given time; and can apply that criterion only when the subjects and modes of labour, and its ordinary produce, are such as we are familiar with. When these are all unknown, and local circumstances also, affecting the workman, are foreign to our experience and observation, we cannot easily form even a comparative estimate of the work, in point

of easiness or intensity. An English farmer may judge from the quantity of corn threshed out in a day, whether his labourer has worked with more or less than ordinary exertion; but what degree of effort has been requisite to produce annually, by a gang of West India slaves, whose number is given, a certain quantity of sugar, and whether the individuals who compose that gang have worked hard or otherwise in given times during the different processes of the plantation, are questions evidently beyond the reach of calculation, upon any premises known to my European readers at large; though I hope to furnish them with some that may suffice for a general and highly probable judgment.

But the same is not the case as to *the diurnal, or other periodical times, during which the work is continued.* Here we have a measure of moderation or excess, positive, definite, and clear; and applicable to every species of human labour, in every climate, though not in an equal degree. The more intense the exertion is, and the hotter the atmosphere, the more fatiguing and exhausting a given duration of labour obviously must be; and the latter distinction is, for reasons assigned in the preceding chapters, of main importance. If the maximum of the time which can be given to the labours of the field in a temperate climate, without prejudice to life or health, can be found, we may with certainty conclude, that in the torrid zone, the same duration of them would amount to great and pernicious excess.

I shall, therefore, in the first place, state and demonstrate the actual portions of time during which the predial slaves in the sugar colonies are compelled to work, diurnally and weekly, at the different seasons of the year: next, shall assist my readers with such information and suggestions as may enable them, in some degree, though imperfectly, to estimate the intensity of the labour; and afterwards, compare it with the ordinary amount of agricultural labour in England, and other countries.

Section II.—*The Labour is cruelly excessive in point of Time.*

Those who are not familiar with the controversies, of which slave trade and slavery have been the subjects, and the general character of those defences which the colonial party have made successively for both, may suppose that the actual time of daily labour, cannot well have been a topic of much dispute in point of fact; more especially if the practice in that respect is uniform and long established; because it may be thought a matter too conspicuous and notorious, to be greatly misrepresented on either side, without certain detection and disgrace.

But unhappily, in this case, the controversy is on one side of the Atlantic, and the facts are on the other. Still more unhappily, the system in question is so highly disreputable and offensive in European eyes, that violations of truth in its defence, are held less disgraceful by those who are engaged in it, than the admission of its real nature and details; nor can they hope, by any fair means, to avert reformations which they deem subversive of their fortunes, by the interposition of the British Legislature. They have not scrupled therefore to publish, and solemnly to attest in this country, statements grossly repugnant to truth, and to local notoriety; and when such impostures have been refuted and exposed, even on the evidence of their own partizans and their own records, they have boldly reiterated the same refuted falsehoods; and endeavoured to cry down as calumniators and liars, all who have borne testimony to the truth.

If any man deems this censure too strong to be true, I refer him to the general misrepresentations exposed in the last chapter; and might refer also to my former volume, for the many extravagant mistatements of the slave-laws, which it quotes and clearly refutes, by extracts from their own printed codes, and by the testimony of some of their own witnesses; and to the many virulent libels by which those labours of mine on the side of the truth have been repaid. Let it not then be thought incredible or strange, that the planters and their apologists, have stated the ordinary long established time of slave labour per diem, as being less in an enormous proportion

than its true amount; or that some of them have had the audacity to advance that it does not exceed eight or nine hours per diem ; whereas I shall prove it, from details furnished by evidence on their own side, to be, in crop-time, eighteen hours and more, and at least sixteen on an average through the year.

The best and fairest way of enabling my readers to understand and apply the evidence on this branch of my subject, will be to shew them, first, what was specifically alleged upon it at the outset, by the early advocates of reformation; and next to examine the colonial testimony that was opposed to them ; especially that which was given before the committees of the privy council and the House of Commons, on the question of abolishing the slave trade. The reader will thus be possessed of the various points that were in issue between the parties, on this important subject; and be enabled to form a right judgment between them as to its true amount at that period; after which he will be better prepared to follow me in an examination of the most recent colonial evidence, in order to determine whether there has since been any change on the side of moderation or mercy.

I shall select, for the first purpose, the statements of the *Rev. Mr. Ramsay ;* because his publication gave the first practical view of slavery in the sugar colonies, that excited the attention of the British public; and formed the basis of the long controversy on that subject which ensued. It was to the refutation or support of his statements, that the respective combatants chiefly bent their efforts. Without a previous knowledge of these, therefore, much of the evidence which I have to cite would be imperfectly understood.

Let it not be supposed for a moment, that I am here receding from the engagement of verifying my delineation of slavery by the testimony of its apologists alone. I do not cite Mr. Ramsay as a *witness*, though he was a highly respectable and competent one; and was attached to the colonies, by the nearest family connections; for he was, like myself, a foe to the system he described. I desire, therefore, that his account may be considered as of no more authority than the speech of a counsel, in opening the case of a prosecutor to the jury. But as it is often absolutely necessary, when a general charge is to be made out in a court of law by

the combined effect of many particular facts, that a connected statement should precede the adduction of proofs; so here, the daily and nightly work of the slaves at different seasons, being a subject of complexity and detail, it is necessary for the reader's assistance, that he should be imformed at the outset, with some particularity, what the accusers allege and undertake to prove. I might, it is true, attain in this respect, the same object by a preliminary statement of my own; but, for the reason assigned, it is better to extract Mr. Ramsay's.

"The discipline of a sugar estate," said that writer, "is as "exact as that of a regiment. At four o'clock in the morn- "ing, the plantation bell rings to call the slaves into the "field. Their work is to manure, dig and hoe-plow, the "ground, to plant, weed, and cut the canes, and bring them "to the mill, &c. About nine o'clock they have half an hour "for breakfast, which they take in the field.—Again they "fall to work; and, according to the custom of the plantation, "continue until eleven o'clock or noon. The bell then rings; "and the slaves are dispersed in the neighbourhood to pick "up about the fences, in the mountains and fallows, or waste "grounds, natural grass and weeds for the horses and cattle. "The time allotted for this branch of work and preparation "of dinner, varies from an hour and a half to near three "hours. In collecting pile by pile their little bundles of "grass, the slaves of lowland plantations frequently burnt "up by the sun, must wander in their neighbour's grounds "perhaps more than two miles from home."

After noticing some occasional hardships, to which the poor slave is exposed by being punished as a trespasser, and having his bundle of grass taken away from him, after its painful collection, he adds, "At one, or in some plantations at two "o'clock, the bell summonses them to deliver in the tale of "their grass, and assemble to their field-work. If the owner "thinks their bundles too small, or if they come too late "with them, they are punished with a number of stripes from "four to ten: some masters, under a fit of carefulness for "their cattle, have gone as far as fifty stripes. About half "an hour before sun-set, they may be found scattered again "over the land, to cull again blade by blade from among the "weeds, their scanty parcels of grass. About seven o'clock

" in the evening, or later according to the season of the year,
" when the overseer can find leisure, they are called over by
" list to deliver in their second bundles of grass; and the
" same punishment as at noon is inflicted on the delinquents.
" They then separate, to pick up, in their way to their huts,
" (if they have not done it, as they generally do, while gather-
" ing grass,) a little brushwood or cow-dung, to prepare some
" simple mess for supper and to-morrow's breakfast. This
" employs them till near midnight; and then they go to sleep
" till the bell calls them in the morning."*

" The work here mentioned (continues Mr. Ramsay) is
" considered as the duty of slaves that may be insisted on,
" without reproach to the manager of unusual severity; and
" which the white and black overseers stand over them to see
" executed; the transgression of which is quickly followed with
" the smart of the cart-whip.† In crop-time, which (he ob-
" serves) may be reckoned together on a plantation from five to
" six months, the cane-tops, by supplying the cattle with food,
" give the slaves some little relaxation in picking grass; but
" some planters, will, especially in moonlight, keep their
" slaves till ten o'clock at night, in carrying wowra (the de-
" cayed leaves of the cane) to boil off the cane juice: a con-
" siderable number of slaves are kept to attend in turn the
" mill and boiling house all night."

" The process of sugar-making, is carried on in many
" plantations for months, without any other interruption than
" during some part of day-light on Sundays. In some plan-
" tations it is the custom to keep the whole gang employed
" as above, from morning to night, and alternately one half
" throughout the night, to supply the mill with canes, and the
" boiling-house with wowra.‡

He admits that there are mitigations of this treatment among the more humane and liberal planters; and adds: " In some particular plantations they enjoy as much ease " and indulgence, the grievance of picking grass, *and the*

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* Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Colonies, by the Rev. James Ramsay, Vicar of Teston, Kent, p. 69—72.

† Ibid. p. 74.

‡ Ibid. p. 76.

" *circumstance of their being so long as sixteen hours out of the* " *twenty-four under the lash of the drivers, excepted,* as are " compatible with their present state of ignorance and " dependance, and the accurate methodical cultivation of a " sugar estate."*

These statements, with Mr. Ramsay's other revolting accounts of negro slavery, were, by the colonial party, loudly and indignantly denied. They exclaimed against its author, as a wilful and malicious violator of truth ; and a gross calumniator of the planters, among whom he had lived respected and beloved, about twenty years. They commenced against him the use of those tactics, which they have since uniformly employed against all the eye-witnesses of their system, who have dared to give their public testimony to its abuses. Numerous defamatory libels were published against him, and widely circulated, to impair his credit in this country ; and not without effect; though, I believe, few men ever had a stronger shield against them, among all to whom the pure and blameless tenor of his private life was known. But as I claim no credence to his testimony, as such, it is not incumbent on me here to defend his memory. It will be enough for me to prove the truth of the statements I have quoted.†

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* Ibid. p. 87.

† In undertaking to prove the truth of this account, I do not mean that it is accurate in every particular; or that it was so generally, in the sense that Mr. R.'s enemies ascribed to it; but only in his own. He meant to describe the practice as he had known it in St. Christopher, or in that island and Nevis alone; as clearly appears from the work itself. In Jamaica, and some other sugar-colonies, the subjects, modes, and times of labour, are, and always have been, variant in some respects from those of the old colonies, which then formed the Leeward-island government; and I shall fully notice those varieties hereafter. The reverend author also admitted, as we have seen, that there was less severity of treatment on some plantations in the same islands, than on others. He meant his account to be considered, therefore, as generally, not universally true.

But I would direct the attention of my readers to the last extract, which I have printed in italics, as descriptive of the ordinary amount of daily labour, even on those estates which he notices as favourable exceptions. That this was not, and still is not, less than sixteen hours in the twenty-four on an average, I trust clearly to establish in respect of the sugar-colonies at

Such having been the facts alleged on the one side, let me next shew to what extent they were denied on the other. In the examinations, that soon after took place before the Committee of the Privy Council, appointed to enquire into facts connected with the slave-trade, there was a standing interrogatory relative to the hours of daily labour generally exacted from, and the times of rest allowed to, the slaves, in each of the sugar-colonies; and many witnesses of the first respectability among the planters, including the agents of the different islands, were examined upon it. Among them, the gentlemen connected with Jamaica, deserve, in respect of the extent and importance of that colony, the first attention. They were, *Mr. Fuller*, the then agent, *Mr. Long*, and *Mr. Chisholme;* and their joint answer was, "*The working hours of the slaves, are* EIGHT, *or not exceeding* NINE "*in the four and twenty.*"*

This was no hasty or ill-considered answer of those respectable witnesses; for their attention having been again called to the subject by another standing interrogatory, which enquired as to differences of the labour, at different seasons of the year; they said, "The work of the negro slaves in "Jamaica, is far less than that of a labourer in Great Britain. "They have in general *fifteen hours in twenty-four* to them-

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large; and if this proposition is proved; it ought to be more than enough for my purpose.

In saying that the slaves worked so long "*under the lash of the drivers,*" Mr. R. was unjustly charged with falsehood. His meaning manifestly is not that the lash was so long actually inflicted, or that the drivers were all the time behind them; for he had described no small portion of it as employed while the slaves, scattered over the same or other estates, were employed in their solitary individual task of grass-picking. His words plainly were meant to convey no more than, that either the presence, or the terror of the driver's whip, compelled the slaves to work so long. It is in this sense, that I undertake to maintain his proposition; and must so far qualify it in respect of colonies, not in his contemplation, those in which the slaves raise their own provisions—as to admit that the coercive principle is not generally during that employment, the terror of the drivers; but in great measure the sense of hunger, or the dread of approaching want.

* Printed Report, part 3. title Jamaica, Q. A. No. 9.

" selves; which is quite sufficient for sleep, and for cooking " and eating their victuals, to say nothing of recreations."*

I request the reader's attention to the terms of this latter answer; because they preclude the resort to an explanation, which I shall have occasion much to notice hereafter,—the omitting in such statements, the time during which the slaves are obliged to work in the culture of provisions, for their own subsistence. No such explanation can here be allowed; since cooking and eating were alleged to be the only deductions from the fifteen hours left for sleep and recreation: nor did these gentlemen say any thing as to the great increase of labour in crop-time; though the interrogatory expressly enquired, whether there was any increase of it in time of harvest.

Here, then, we have a breadth of contradiction to Mr. Ramsay, such as must astonish any man not familiar with the ordinary character of colonial testimony on these subjects. The difference in respect of this general fact, of the utmost publicity in the colonies, is as eight or nine to sixteen; or nearly as two to one. If these witnesses spoke the truth, the reverend author they contradicted, a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England, in venturing on so enormous an exaggeration, in the face of a powerful party, with multitudes on the spot to whom his exposure would be interest, honour, and favour with all their fellow-colonists, must be supposed to have made shipwreck, not only of his morals, but his understanding. But before the reader adopts this conclusion, let him in the next place attend to what other witnesses on the colonial side, stated on the same subject, nearly at the same time.

Almost all the other witnesses examined before the Privy Council, in answering the same interrogatories, prudently avoided defining the amount of labour or of respite, by the number of hours per day. The only exception I have noted, was Mr. Laing of Dominica, who says, " They (the slaves) " are not on an average employed above *ten* hours in the " twenty-four."† If he meant to include the crop-time,

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* Printed Report, &c., Q. A. No. 36.

† Privy Council Report, part 3. title Dominica, A. No. 9.

this is a discordancy with the Jamaica witnesses, by no more than one or two hours per day, (no small difference, certainly, in respect of hard and constant labour, more especially between the tropics); but it plainly appears, that he could not so mean; because in answering the other interrogatory, he states that in the crop-season, which he says is from February to June, "The "slaves employed in the mill and boiling house, are only "relieved once in twenty-four hours,"* the effect of which must very greatly, on his own premises, have enlarged that average.

Other witnesses before the Privy Council, while avoiding any such simple and intelligible statements; entered into details, of which I shall soon shew, that the effect was a much larger difference than Mr. Laing's, with Messrs. Fuller, Long, and Chisholme; and a much nearer agreement with Mr. Ramsay.

But further examinations on the same subjects took place in 1790 and 1791, before a Committee of the House of Commons; and one very eminent and long-experienced planter of Jamaica, John Wedderburne, Esq. was interrogated specifically on the same point, the number of hours per diem.—Q. "How many hours of the twenty-four do the negroes "labour; *the time of crop excepted?*" Answer. "*About eleven* "*hours.*"†

Is it supposed that this respectable gentleman spoke from ignorance? He says, in the same evidence, that he himself "had the charge of plantations containing full 5000 slaves."‡ He was a witness called by the West India petitioners; and certainly no enemy of the system. He spoke of the treatment of the slaves as in general very humane; and said "their situation was a happy one."§ Yet we find that, without including the crop-season, in which the time of labour is admitted by every witness, and every writer that has noticed the subject, to be very largely augmented by night-work, he added no less than between *two and three hours*, i. e. from one-fourth to one-third, to what his brother planters of the same

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* Ibid. A. No. 36.

† Commons Report on the Slave Trade 1790, p. 376.

‡ Ibid. 370. § Ibid. 378.

island, and its public agent, had stated to the Privy Council as the true amount of the time of daily labour. He admitted eleven hours out of crop; whereas they made, as I have observed, no exception of the crop-time; but must have meant to be understood to mean eight or nine hours on an average of all seasons.

And what is the length of the crop time? They themselves stated it to be about *five months*.* We must therefore add to the enormous difference between their account and Mr. Wedderburne's, five-twelfths of the great, but yet undefined increment of labour, during that portion of the year.

The colonial petitioners, in the same parliamentary examinations, addressed a question to one of their witnesses, *Alexander Douglas*, Esq. then an eminent West India merchant, and with the evident view of contradicting Mr. Ramsay; probably because Mr. Douglas and he had long resided in the same island, St. Christopher. The question was, "Do you "conceive that, *at any time or season of the year*, the respite "granted to negroes in the island of St. Christopher from "their labour, amounts only to four or five hours out of the "twenty-four?" The answer was, "I think they have from "*nine to eleven hours' respite.*" If so, from thirteen to fifteen hours, would be the time of labour. It may be supposed, perhaps, that this answer had reference to the crop-season; because Mr. Ramsay had shewn that the slaves who then work with relays through the night, added to their ordinary day work, could not have more than four or five clear hours for sleep. But the witness could not with consistency have taken night-work into the account, because he had immediately before said he understood that practice to have been abolished on most estates.† In that case, his estimate in a general view might not have been far from the truth; but those who led the respectable witness so to understand, might as truly have asserted that fires in the winter season were for the most part laid aside in London; as the reader will find, when I cite the evidence on that part of the system. At all events, his admission put those witnesses out of court who

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* Privy Council Report, part 3, title Jamaica, Q. A. No. 36.

† Commons Report of 1790, p. 289.

alleged *eight or nine hours* to be the limitation, without any exception of the crop-time.

The reader, I trust, already sees, that the evidence for the defendants was hardly more inconsistent with the charge of the accuser, than with itself. But let us proceed.

Doctor Collins, who wrote about ten years later than these accounts, unfortunately omits to state expressly the ordinary times of work. It is the most striking defect in his very valuable publication ; and one of which I am at no loss to conjecture the reason ; but it may be clearly collected, that if he had been explicit on this subject, tender though he always is in touching abuses of a general kind, his statement would have confirmed or gone beyond that of Mr. Wedderburne ; for in advising the planters to repair the huts of their slaves, so as to exclude the wind and rain, he urges the consideration that they cannot find time to do that work for themselves, and says, " With negroes, *half whose time* is devoted to the service of " their masters, the little which is not given to sleep, must " necessarily be employed in obtaining or cooking their food, " which exhausts almost the whole of their short remissions " from labour."* A strange contrast this, by the way, to the representations of the Jamaica gentlemen, and many others that I shall hereafter have to state, which describe these poor beings as having fifteen hours in the twenty-four for rest and recreation ; and as having a superfluity of leisure to gain wealth for themselves.

It may be thought, perhaps, that the expression *half their* time in this passage, is used in a loose, general way ; and was not meant to convey the idea that they work so much as twelve hours in twenty-four for the master ; but in another place, when recommending the substitution of task work for driving, the same intelligent colonist says, " the work of *twelve hours* will be *dispatched in ten.*† I infer, therefore, that he meant to be understood as estimating the ordinary work out of crop at twelve hours ; and if so, his account will fall little short of Mr. Ramsay's ; for let it be observed that he assigns the " *obtaining their food*" as a charge upon the re-

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* Medical Rules, &c., p. 135. † Ibid. 177.

maining twelve hours of their time; and their subsistence in St. Vincent, where he resided, as in Jamaica, was in great measure derived from the cultivation of their provision grounds, which, like most other colonial writers, he does not seem to regard strictly as work for the master. It appears, also, clearly, from what he elsewhere says of night work in crop-time, that he did not take that important addition into account in his general estimate of their daily labour.

But let us return to the Privy Council evidence for further demonstration on this subject; for though the witnesses I have cited were the only ones that thought fit to state expressly the amount of labour by the number of hours per diem, premises were furnished by others from which they may, with proper explanations, be computed.

While the committee of Privy Council was prosecuting its enquiries, the legislatures of Jamaica and of some other colonies, were preparing to parry the efforts of the abolitionists, by passing some specious, though impotent laws for the protection of their slaves; and before the committee had finished its labours, the first of those ostensible improvements, the consolidation act of Jamaica of 1788, arrived, in time to give the colonial party the benefit of it in the report. Meantime the standing interrogatories of the committee had been officially transmitted to the governors of the different colonies, with instructions to lay them before the councils and assemblies, and obtain answers to them from those bodies; in consequence of which answers were obtained from some of them, and transmitted soon enough to be inserted in the same report. That of the council of Jamaica to Q. A. No. 9. immediately follows the above cited answer of Messrs. Fuller, Chisholme, and Long; and is in these words, "*This is answered by the consolidation act; to the directions whereof the practice usually conforms.*"*

Whether the latter proposition was true, my readers will be soon enabled to judge; but they will not hesitate to believe that if not so, the misrepresentation at least was not on the unfavourable side. Considering the manifest object of the

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* Privy Council Report, part 3, title Jamaica, Q. A. No. 9.

legislators, and of their agent and partizans in this country, by whose solicitations the Act was passed, and who immediately made abundant use of it before Parliament and the British public, it is impossible to suppose that its ostensible regulations were calculated to discredit the general existing practice of slavery, by holding out limitations of labour less humane than those which practice had already established.

The singular style of the clause thus referred to, might suffice to mark the true object of its authors; for it is perhaps the first law that ever embodied in its own enactments an averment, implying that they were not wanted. The clause was in the following words: "Be it enacted, that every field "slave on such plantation or settlement shall on work days be "allowed, *according to custom*, half an hour for breakfast, and "two hours for dinner; and that no slave shall be compelled "to any manner of *field work* upon the plantations before the "hour of *five* in the morning, or after the hour of *seven* at "night, *except during the time of crop*, under the penalty of "ten pounds," &c. *

We have an express admission here, then, from the highest authority on the colonial side, that the customary practice was not better than these limitations prescribe. Let us next consider, therefore, to what they amount. It is the more important, to do so, because the same are identically the regulations of labour by law in Jamaica, and every other sugar colony where assemblies have passed any Acts on the subject at the present hour: and I shall prove that the practice now, as in 1788, though it does not conform to these regulations, departs from them only on the oppressive or exacting side.

From five in the morning till seven in the evening, being fourteen hours, and the breakfast and dinner respite (if we suppose them, for the present, to be *bonâ fide* intervals of rest)

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* Consolidation Slave Act of December 6, 1788, sect. 18, printed in an appendix to the same report of the Privy Council, part 3. See also the Consolidation Act of 1792, printed by Mr. Edwards in his 2nd volume, where the clause was re-enacted in the same words; and the same was the case in the Act of December, 1816, sect. 20. still in force, except that the words "according to custom" are omitted.

amounting together only to two hours and a half, there remains, as the amount of daily labour in the cane pieces, or "field work" *out of crop-time, eleven hours and a half.*

Let me pause here again for a moment, to compare this result with the statement of the colonial agent and eminent proprietors resident here, who were examined by the same committee. Take eight hours and a half as the medium between their terms, and we have a subduction of no less than three hours from the actual amount. We must add near three-eighths to the quantum alleged by them, in order to make it agree with the cotemporary admission of the legislative council of their island, and of the Act to which they refer.

But this is by no means all; since those witnesses, be it remembered, spoke, without any exception of the crop-time, the large augmentation of labour in which continues about five months in the year.*

We have it thus established beyond all dispute, that even at the season of the shortest diurnal labours, they occupy at least eleven hours and a half of the twenty-four; but to reduce them to this amount, it must be supposed that the interval of half an hour in the morning and two hours at noon, are really and entirely periods of rest, or exemptions from every species of laborious occupation; which is not, and cannot possibly be the truth. If they were so, what time would be left for the slaves to work in, or even visit, their own provision grounds, when near enough for access on working days?

We are told that Saturday afternoon once a fortnight, or

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* Should the reader be disposed to give the Jamaica council some credit for candour in thus discrediting their own agent, and the other witnesses that had been brought forward by their partizans in this country; let him observe that the Consolidation Act may be presumed from its date, December, 1788, to have been laid before the governor for his assent, and officially transmitted by him, though not yet received in this country, before the testimony that I have cited from the Privy Council Report could be known in Jamaica. There was probably a like priority in the answer of the council, which is not dated; but if not, the statement of the usage so strangely introduced into the enactments themselves, had stopped them from alleging that the practice differed from the law.

by some planters, every week, is allowed for the purpose of cultivating those grounds out of the crop-season. Let this be supposed to be generally true; and that with the aid of Sabbath work, which is confessedly applied to that purpose, the time is made to suffice: still the provisions must be gathered, as well as raised, and brought from the grounds, which are generally far distant from the negro huts and homestall, and not less so from the cane-pieces where these brief respites begin and end. Besides, the raw provisions must be boiled, roasted, or otherwise prepared for eating.

The poor slave, be it always remembered, has no wife at home to prepare his meals for him; for she, if he has one, is worked in the field with himself, till the general dismission of the gang. If we should suppose materials for the meal already at their hut, still they must go there to dress it; and to go and return, a mile or two under a vertical sun, mounting, perhaps, steep acclivities, as is very usual, in the way, is a bad mode of recruiting their strength after six or seven hours of arduous labour, previous to its renewal for four or five more on the same day. During the half hour allowed for breakfast, such means of providing for their own necessities are manifestly impracticable.

How then, the reader may be curious to learn, do these poor drudges manage as to their meals? In satisfying his curiosity, I shall, perhaps, stagger his belief. The breakfast is often, and the dinner most commonly, *a meal only in name.* The former may often be lost, though there should be no deficiency of food, from want of time to prepare it. In Jamaica, indeed, the practice is said generally to be, to allow one negro or more to act as cooks in the field, for those who bring with them raw materials for breakfast; but I believe that in most, or all other colonies, there is no such usage; and that unless the slave brings to the field food ready prepared for eating, he must fast, from the want of means to prepare it there, and of time to return for the purpose.

During the noontide respite, the more feeble slaves generally lie down, to recruit from their fatigue; and the more able, commonly go to work on their provision grounds or gardens, unless when they are too remote for the purpose.

However startling these accounts may be, with those who have had faith enough in their colonial friends, to credit the strange fables industriously circulated amongst us, as to the ease and luxury that the slaves enjoy, I trust the following extracts will be found sufficient to support my statements.

That the field negroes, commonly, return dinnerless to their work after the noontide pause, is a fact respecting which, however extraordinary, there is very little discordance among the West India witnesses or writers; to prove which, I will cite three or four of them, who spoke or wrote at different periods, from the beginning of the abolition controversy down to the present time.

"They continue upon the hoe," said *Mr. Beckford*, "till "dinner time; that is, until twelve or one o'clock, and perhaps "the medium of these hours is the general time of vacancy "all over the Island (Jamaica). Although this be called the "time of refection, and is with the overseer and the white "people upon the plantation, that part of the day which is "set apart for this particular purpose, *yet in this interval, the* "*negroes seldom make a meal*; but are rather inclined to in- "dulge their leisure in conversation with their fellows, or to "loiter away the time in useless inactivity until the shell pre- "pares them for a renovation of toil. They are allowed," he adds, "for *a nominal dimer* one hour and a half, but it gene- "rally exceeds two before they all re-assemble."*

"It may be proper to observe," deposed *Mr. Tobin of Nevis*, "that the two hours at noon is *seldom employed by a negro* "*in preparing a regular meal*, their chief meal being at sup- "per, so that they are frequently to be found working in "their grounds during that interval."†

"They are allowed," deposed *Mr. Willock of Antigua*, "*an* "*hour and a half* for dinner time, and frequently take "an opportunity during that interval to work in their "grounds."‡

On this point, even *Mr. Bryan Edwards* did not wholly

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* Remarks upon the situation of Negroes in Jamaica, by Mr. W. Beckford, Jun., p. 44, 45.

† Commons Report of 1790, p. 276. ‡ Ibid. 347.

suppress the truth, which his predecessors had admitted; though he qualified it with his usual address. "They are "now allowed two hours of rest and refreshment, one of "which is commonly spent in sleep. Many of them, *pre-* "*ferring a plentiful supper to a meal at noon,* pass the hours "of recess in sleep, or in collecting food for their pigs and "poultry, of which they are *permitted to keep as many as* "*they please;* or perhaps a few of the more industrious will "*employ an hour in their provision grounds.*

English labourers also, are permitted to drink as much wine as they please, provided they can get it; and it would be about as fair to insinuate on that account that they spend their spare time in bottling their Port or Madeira, as of the common mass of field negroes, that they employ their noon respite in collecting food for their pigs and poultry. But under these artful glosses, the impressive fact peeps out, that whether to reserve food enough for the evening, or to provide it for the future, or from whatever motive, the dinner is foregone.

"At half-past twelve," writes *Mr. De La Beche, in* 1824, "a conch shell is sounded, for all the negroes on the property "to take their dinner; *but as dinner is a meal seldom taken by* "*the negroes,* who from choice defer their principal repast till "the evening, the *more industrious part of them generally de-* "*vote the two hours allowed them by law at this time, to the cul-* "*tivation of their provision grounds,* a large proportion of "which is in this estate (his own) within five minutes' walk "from their houses."†

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* Hist. of West Indies, vol. ii. p. 134.

† Notes, &c., p. 3. The respectable author seems here to have forgotten that it is not from their houses, that the negroes are to come at noon, but from the cane-piece, however distant, that they were at work upon; and to which they must return within the two hours allowed.

It would be unjust, however, to this gentleman, not to add that he writes with a degree of candour which distinguishes him very honourably from the other West India planters who have given information on these subjects to the British public. It is not without hesitation that I add to these authorities an extract from the work called *Barclay's.* The ultra contempt of truth and fair dealing, manifest in every page of it, makes the citation of it, even against its compilers, painful and disgusting: but it

When these accounts are taken together, it will be seen what the case really was and is. The *poor people rarely, if ever, dine;* but during the two hours in which the superintendants retire for their dinners, the slaves are released from the drivers, and left to spend the time either in rest, or in working individually on their provision grounds. The former is naturally the choice of those slaves who, being the weakest in body, are the most completely fatigued and exhausted by six or seven previous hours of vigorous exertion; but the more "*industrious,*" by which we may generally understand in colonial language the *stronger* slaves, avail themselves of this opportunity to work in their grounds, when near enough, or bring provisions from them; thereby perhaps obtaining for themselves relaxations on the Sabbath, which they otherwise could not enjoy; and sometimes to collect firewood for their own use in the evening, or bundles of the same article, or of grass for sale in the market, if they are fortunate enough to be near a town.

It is a cruel abuse of terms to say, even of those who remain inactive, from weary nature's irresistible demand for a short respite, between two long periods of forced .labour, that they have so much *time for themselves.* But to those who are less exhausted, the respite at noon, miscalled dinner time, gives, we see, neither food nor rest, but a change of labour only; though it is, I admit, a change much for the better, because the drivers are no longer behind them.

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brings down the West India case to a more recent period by two years, that Mr. De la Beche's work, and I find this passage in it (p. 319), in respect of the noon-tide respite. — "They employ the time at their own con-
"cerns—mending their fences or hogsties, carrying home fire-wood, cane-
"tops, or hog-meat, &c. A *few roasted plantains, with a little fish, is all*
"*they seem to care about eating in the middle of the day,* breakfast and supper
"being their chief meals."

Where, when, and how, do they procure and dress the fish and roast the plantains? Why was it not said that they resort to taverns for a lunch of turtle, and some glasses of madeira? Certainly not because it is not equally true. This *chef d'œuvre* of the party quite beggars the invention of Mr. Edwards, and the rest who have endeavoured to varnish over the want of a dinner, and the labours that employ the miscalled dinner-time. Yet the opprobrious facts appear.

When we are gravely told that such toilsome employment of an interval placed between six hours and a half of previous, and five hours of subsequent driving, under the solar blaze, is matter of choice, laughter may be suppressed by pity and indignation; but a serious answer surely cannot be called for. If any man has faith to believe it, he must deem the poor negroes industrious to a fault, and to a wonder; and must be astonished therefore at the charges of *Major Moody* and others, who tell us that the love of ease, of repose, and refreshment in the shade, is so strong in them, as to prompt them to a vicious excess in its indulgence, and to be wholly indomitable except by the driving-whip.

But the slave-masters are here only at their ordinary practices on English credulity. It is a standing rule with them, to extenuate every oppression which they can neither deny, nor as their own act defend, by the choice of the poor slaves themselves. Are they compelled, for instance, to watch and work at night during the crop? we are told THEY *like it*; and prefer the crop-season to all others. Are they denied a Sabbath rest? it is because they love the Sunday markets, and would be discontented with their abolition. Is marriage discouraged, and its rights set at nought? it is because they love polygamy or loose amours. The impious neglect of all religious instruction, was long excused by the same plea: the negroes were said to be invincibly attached to their African superstitions; yet when the indignant voice of the British people called forth the Jamaica Curates' Bill, they rushed, we hear, in multitudes to the Christian font. Nay, the tearing them from their native homes and their dearest connections, and transporting them to a distant colony for life, till an act of Parliament put a stop to it, was also their singular *choice*. Even after that prohibition, masters and mistresses have had the face to solicit particular exceptions to it from Government and Parliament, on the same preposterous suggestion; and I lament to say not always without success. While the shores of some of our islands rang with the heart-piercing lamentations of wives and husbands, parents and children, severed to meet no more, and resistance, by the desertion of many of the devoted exiles, was suppressed only by military force, the British

public and Legislature were actually led to believe that the *wishes of the banished slaves* seconded the relentless cupidity of their masters!

These strange self-inimical propensities, certainly, in the point before us, as in all the rest, fall in admirably with the master's convenience and interest. His drivers and overseers are relieved from a wearisome superintendance during the excessive heat from twelve to two, and have time to return from the field to their dinner; while the slaves, if not too much exhausted, are performing work for the supply of their own urgent necessities, in ease of the master's purse.

The employment of the half hour in the morning, for breakfast, is more variously represented; I mean as to the actuality of the meal, or the want of it; and I believe it really varies much in different colonies, and also on different plantations. I will give a few extracts from the colonial writers and witnesses on this subject also; leaving the reader to form his own conclusions from them, whether the breakfast is the most commonly, nominal, or real.

Let us first hear the comprehensive and very authoritative testimony of Dr. Collins. "At breakfast it is customary to "indulge the gang with half an hour, *which is rather taken as* "*an intermission of labour, than for a meal; as negroes seldom* "*apply it to that purpose;* yet it is too salutary a practice to "be discontinued; for it is *a loss of time* that will be easily re- "paired by their invigorated efforts. Those who have in- "fants," he adds, "should be allowed an hour to repair to "the nursery to give them the breast." *

Dr. Collins, be it observed, speaks in general of all the sugar colonies; and his humane suggestions are addressed to the proprietors of them all. That he sincerely aimed at improvements cannot be doubted; yet all, we see, that he ventures to recommend, is continuing the suspension of labour, not supplying the meal; and he recommends the improvement solely on an economical ground; admitting it to be, in a view to the meal itself, a mere loss of time.

His advice as to mothers who have suckling infants, may

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* Practical Rules, p. 188-9.

require an explanatory comment. That their labour in the field may not be lost or interrupted, such infants are consigned, in the gross, to the care of a plantation dry-nurse at the negro huts or homestall, in a receptacle which he here dignifies by the name of a nursery; and we see that he regards an hour's interval as necessary to enable the poor infants to receive the breakfast which Nature has prepared for them in the breakfastless mother. No more can be necessary to shew that the adult slaves cannot possibly have time to return and prepare it for themselves.

Mr. Tobin, who was certainly one of the most liberal of planters, assuming his statements of his own practice to be impartial, but a violent public antagonist of Mr. Ramsay, said, "Upon *many* estates, *and upon all of which I had the* "*direction*, they had *out of crop time* a regular breakfast, of a "biscuit and a proportion of molasses and water, which in "wet and rainy weather was qualified with rum."* This witness spoke of the island of Nevis.

Mr. Thomas, speaking of Nevis also, said, "About nine "they broke up for the purpose of breakfasting, which was "generally taken in the field, in preference of going to and "from their houses" (a very necessary preference, certainly), and for this purpose, he added, "*every good-inclined negro* "generally carried his breakfast with him."† Unfortunately he did not state what the proportion of these "good inclined "negroes" was; and what was the lot of the rest. Had the practice been general at Nevis, Mr. Tobin would hardly have spoken as he did.

Mr. Willock, of Antigua, a master of distinguished liberality, mentioned a peculiarity of practice on his estate; that of his having generally fed *about one-third of his whole gang* on what is called "*the pot*;" i. e. food prepared and dressed for them by the master; and gave the following reason for it. "My reason for feeding so many out of the pot, was a direc-"tion given to the overseers, that when the negroes went to "their breakfast in the field, *if any negro did not bring some-*"*thing to eat*, I immediately took away his allowance, and "fed him from the pot. Though the quantity of provisions,"

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* Commons Report of 1790, p. 297. † Ibid. 354.

he added, " they got from being fed from the pot, was much " more, yet it was a disgrace to them, and they disliked it ex- " ceedingly, as they conceived themselves treated like new " negroes.* One-third of his negroes, therefore, were kept from being breakfastless only by this humane but extraordinary expedient.

I do not wish my readers to infer from these authorities, strong and various though they are, that the field negroes always, or very generally, work fasting through the day, and that their supper after their dismission from the labours of the field is their only meal. Their oppression, in respect of food, will be a separate subject of discussion in a subsequent chapter; and it well then, I doubt not, appear to the conviction of my readers, that in many, or most of the colonies, if they eat more than once in the twenty-four hours, it must be very sparingly indeed; at least, where they wholly or chiefly depend on the master's weekly allowances for support. I have cited these colonial testimonies here, only lest uninformed readers should doubt the possibility of the meal-time respites being diverted from their nominal use, and being periods of actual labour, well attested though we have seen the fact to be, by the apologists of the system. I feel myself warranted by so many concurrent and unexceptionable authorities, to affirm, what I believe the fact to be, that though the practice as to breakfasts varies in different colonies, and on different estates in the same colony, the dinner is, generally speaking, everywhere dispensed with; but whether from choice or necessity, my readers will be better enabled to judge, when informed of the ordinary practice as to the supply and preparation of food. Meantime let us return to that important topic, the hours of daily labour.

Hitherto I have proceeded on the supposition that the labours of the slaves out of crop-time may, in a proper and strict sense, be said to begin at five in the morning, and end at seven in the evening, according to the alleged effect of the limitations in the colonial meliorating acts, to which, as we are assured by the legislators who made them, and by the

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* Commons Report of 1790, p. 247.

recitals and averments of the acts themselves, the practice conforms.

But what, by the express purview of these laws, is the work to which the limitations apply? It is only *actual labour in the field*; in other words, that work which the collected gang performs under the drivers, from the morning muster to the evening dismissal, which is limited, as we have seen, to fourteen hours, with intervals of two hours and a half. They are not sooner or later to be "*compelled to any* "*manner of field-work*, except in the crop-season."

Are the remaining ten hours and a half of the twenty-four, then, noon-work excepted, times of rest or repose? Clearly not; for before the morning-work can begin, the negroes must be roused from their sleep, and "turned out," as it is called, from their huts; and every individual must proceed to, and assemble at the spot, however distant, of appointed work. Many, no doubt, to avoid the peril of tardiness, arrive before the rest; for there the driver stands with his whip, to inflict instant flagellation on those who come too late; and if the gang is to be put in line at five o'clock, the bell, or conch-shell, or far-resounding whip, variously used to awaken the slaves, must give their awful summons long before. The cane-piece where they are to be worked for the day, may be at a great distance from the huts; sometimes on large estates from one to two miles; and very commonly they have a steep hill to ascend; for most estates, at least in the smaller islands, range from the sea side or low grounds, to a considerable height on the side of a high hill or mountain; and the cluster of houses called the negro-houses, is commonly placed in the lower situations, near the manager's house and the works. On the whole, I think it a probable calculation, that an hour, or nearly that time, must intervene on an average between the rousing the negroes from their sleep, and their setting to work in the field.

Nor is this all; for so assiduous are the planters that the work should begin as soon as there is light enough for the purpose, that the bell or other call is always sounded at the earliest peep of dawn; nay often still sooner, as may sufficiently appear by the following extract from Dr. Collins.

"In turning out in the morning," says that long-expe-

rienced planter, "it is usual to prepare your negroes by the "morning bell, which by the carelessness of the watchman, "or by the difficulty of distinguishing between the light of "the moon, and the first approach of morning, is rung an "hour or two earlier than it ought to be. This you should "prevent, by directing it not to be rung, until the twilight is "very well ascertained."*

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* Practical Rules, p. 88.

Two very recent authorities may suffice to shew that the negroes are still called out before day-break. The first is a work called *Marly, or a Planter's Life in Jamaica*, a new publication on the colonial side, in the catching form of a novel. Should my right to quote him as an antagonist be doubted, I refer to his sixteenth chapter, in which the novellist drops his mask, and appears in his true character, as a serious and zealous apologist of slavery, and champion of the colonial cause. From his graphic delineations of scenery and manners, no man who has seen the West Indies will doubt of his having been resident there.

When describing his hero's initiation in the duties of a plantation book-keeper, he says: —

"Next morning Marly was awakened out of a dream of delight, &c., "by *the firing of the driver's whip*;"—"he started from his bed, but *day had "not yet glimmered from the East*." (p. 62.) Again — "Next morning, "*before day broke*, the *firing, or smacking, of the driver's whip* awakened "Marly, when he started from his pillow," &c. (p. 49.)

The other recently published authority to which I refer, is no novel; but that grave defence of slavery by *Mr. Commissioner Dwarris*, which I have before cited, in a letter to the *Right Honourable Henry Goulburn*, Chancellor of the Exchequer. "It is said," observes Mr. Dwarris, "that "the slaves *begin their toil before day; and the assertion is true*; but in "such a climate, it is no hardship to begin their work in the cool of the "morning. It ought," he adds, "*in common candour*, at the same time, "to have been stated, that in the countries of which we are now speaking, "all classes rise at gunfire; *i. e.* at five o'clock in the morning." (p. 17.)

A modest appeal to *candour* this, no doubt! The whites certainly do, in general, rise very early, especially if careful of their health; but it is to enjoy the cool air, and to take exercise before the sun rises; not to increase the length of daily toil. As to the field-negroes, they are so far from being called out before day, for health or comfort, that Dr. Collins, and all other authorities on the subject, notice their great sensibility to sufferings from cold, and regard the chilling effects of their being turned out long before sun-rise, as one great source of their diseases. If this *candid* writer thinks it humane to work negroes in the earliest dawn because it is cold, his abhorrence of the intolerable long-continued toils they are afterwards

Another extract from *Mr. De La Beche*, will shew that the poor weary, and drowsy slave, is likely not to demur at the rousing call, however premature; but to spring from his pallet at the first sound of the plantation bell or whip, and make all haste to the field.

"It is much to be regretted," he says, "that considerable "martinetism exists on some properties, with regard to the "time when the negroes ought to assemble in the morning. "Then it is that the negroes suffer most from the driver's "whip; for he unfortunately can on his own authority in- "flict punishment on those who are not in time."*

Not a few of the colonial witnesses and writers have attempted to subtract an hour at least from the morning's field-work, by representing its commencement to be at six o'clock, instead of five; but in a way inconsistent not only with what I have shown to be the actual practice, but with astronomical and geographical truth.

"About six o'clock in the morning," said one of them, "*which is generally about day-light*, the whole gang are ex- "pected to appear in the field; the list was then called over, "and absentees were marked down."†

"With respect to the hours," said another, "the negroes are "generally called into the field by the ringing of a bell about "*dawn of day*, which, in a latitude where the days and nights "are so nearly equal, is generally about six o'clock."‡

On the same physical premises it was of course added, that day-light ended at six, and that the slaves remained no later in the field; and some of the colonial writers I think arraigned the abolitionists of having asserted, what the laws of nature made impossible, when they stated the true daily commencement and termination of the field-work.

It may naturally be supposed that the first Jamaica Conso-

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subjected to in that broiling climate through the day, ought surely to exceed my own. But I quote him only for the fact. As *it is true that* "the "slaves still *begin their toil before daylight*," they must of course be still *roused and turned out* before the first peep of dawn.

* Notes on the present Condition of the Slaves in Jamaica, p. 19.

† Commons Report of 1790, p. 247; Evidence of Mr. Thomas of Nevis.

‡ Ibid. p. 266; Evidence of Mr. Tobin.

lidation Act disposed for ever of this part of the controversy. In making five and seven the morning and evening limits of field-work out of crop-time, *i. e.* in a season comprising the shortest days, and stating that this was conformable to general custom, it should have put an end both to the astronomical and practical question.

But the champions of slavery are far too stout to quail under such knock-down blows, whether given by their foes or fellow-combatants; and they now again with all their pristine intrepidity attempt to cut off two hours from the day, in order to reduce by the same amount the actual labour of the slaves. The courageous *Mr. M'Queen* assures us, in what he calls "*a plain and undeniable statement*, that the *days* and "*nights* in our West India islands are so nearly equal, that "the difference is not worth taking into account, and may "be taken *at twelve hours each;*"* from which and other premises, equally undeniable, he concludes, and expressly asserts, that "*no negro out of crop works above nine hours.*"

Though this writer is so strongly accredited to us by all the colonies, that his voice may be fairly considered as theirs, I might probably leave him here to settle the small difference of two hours and a half between himself and his munificent patrons, the legislators of Jamaica, if this revival of exploded fictions stood on his authority alone. But the Council of Barbadoes, in a nearly cotemporary Report, has stated, that "the slaves do not work more than *nine hours* for the day "at that season of the year when the days are short, and *nine* "*hours and a half* when the days are long;" from which reference to the length of days, and the near correspondence with Mr. M'Queen's conclusion, it may be fairly presumed, that his "*undeniable*" premises were in view, and tacitly assumed by that honourable Board.†

The Assembly of Jamaica, also, in the latest report it has favoured us with on this subject of slave labour, has reduced its amount out of crop, not indeed to nine hours, but to *ten*, notwithstanding the evidence of its renewed and still subsisting law.

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* West India Colonies, p. 257.

† Printed Report of the Council of Barbadoes, 1824, p. 108.

"Although by the consolidated slave law, the master may "call for fourteen hours' labour in the field, deducting one "half hour for breakfast, and two hours for dinner, leaving "of course eleven hours and a half for work; yet in practice, "the time for labour in summer is one hour, and in winter "two hours, less than might be exacted by law; so that the "labourer only works on an average ten hours daily, *and has "fourteen for meals, relaxation, and rest.*" *

How remote from truth the last clause is, my readers have been already enabled to judge: but my business at present is with the field-work under the drivers, the only subject of limitation; and though the report itself, in reducing the practice to ten hours, does not expressly say that it begins and ends with the daylight, the examinations annexed, and referred to, shew clearly that such an impression was meant to be conveyed; and also that the calculation was founded on astronomical data grossly erroneous, though less so than those of Mr. M'Queen. See an important extract from those examinations given in a former chapter (p. 36-7,) the first paragraph of which it will be convenient to place again here under the eye of the reader.

"As to the hours of labour, when the examinant came to "the island, the slaves were turned out full one hour *before "day*, and kept out as long *after dark*. Their breakfast was "always cooked for them, and they were allowed half an "hour to eat it, and two hours to go home to their dinner. "As *the length of the days* on an average through the year in "this climate, *including twilight*, is about *twelve hours and a "half*, so the slave then worked twelve hours in the twenty-"four. At present, the same time is allowed for breakfast and "dinner, but the slaves, as far as examinant sees, are only "required to work in the field in *daylight*, and consequently, "they work only ten hours in the twenty-four."

I will not suppose the respectable witness to have meant any thing unfair, either by the qualification, "*as far as exami-"nant sees*," or by his changes of phraseology in the two subjects of comparison, from "*turned out, and kept out*," to

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* Printed Papers of 1816, already cited,) p. 25.

"*worked, and required to work in the field,*" or from "*length* "*of the days,*" to "*daylight.*" They must have been used respectively in the same sense, or the comparison would be plainly idle, and the effect wholly deceptious.

But what he, and the Committee in adopting his calculations, must be understood to mean, is this, that the "length "of the day, or daylight, including the twilight," is on an average only twelve hours and a half; which deducting the allowance of two hours and a half for meal-times, leaves ten clear hours of field-work; and that the former excess arose from the working an hour before the morning, and an hour after the evening, twilight.

The fallacy here lies in the alleged duration of the twilight, which the witness rightly and expressly included in the daylight or length of days; whereas the other authorities I have cited allow for it nothing at all; but strangely shorten the *day* to the time that the sun is above the horizon, and treat all the rest as *night*.

Now, though it is true, that the twilight in the West Indies is much shorter at all seasons than here, to say that it is so short on a medium, or at any season, taking the morning and evening together, as not to make a very considerable and formidable addition to the daily labour of a hard-worked slave, would be a proposition equally unfeeling and false.

It would be so, even were the daily addition no more than half an hour, *i. e.* one quarter of an hour for each twilight, according to this strange computation; but in this instance the enormity of the misrepresentations I have to combat, may be shewn by witnesses who can neither be silenced nor traduced; even those of whom it is said, "their line is gone out "through all the earth, and their words to the end of the "world; and that there is no speech or language where their "voice is not heard." The heavenly luminaries shall prove for me, that my opponents, to extenuate their oppressions, have wrested from the tropical day a sixth part of its legitimate domains.

As to the time, during which, on an annual average the sun is above the horizon, there is no disagreement between us; and if there were, I could not suppose any of my readers so ill-informed, as not at once to decide it for themselves. The

average time is just twelve hours. Neither can it be necessary to shew, that in all climates, and at all times, the morning and evening twilights are of equal duration. The only point, therefore, on which doubt can arise, is their true medium length, taking together the different seasons of the year. Now, the latitude being given, (which in the central parts of Jamaica is about eighteen degrees north, and in our other islands, too near that parallel to be worth a separate calculation,) many of my readers will be able to compute the true duration of twilight for themselves, on the known astronomical rule, that it every where begins in the morning when the sun approaches within eighteen degrees of the horizon, and ends when the sun has dipped eighteen degrees below it, in the evening. For the assistance of those, who, like myself are not expert mathematicians, I have asked the favour of a friend, who is very eminently such, to calculate for me what is the shortest, and what the longest duration of twilight in latitude eighteen north, at different seasons; and to compute from them its medium duration throughout the year. He has kindly done so; and having submitted his solutions of those problems to another friend, celebrated for his mathematical skill, who has confirmed them, I can safely vouch for their accuracy, as contained in a note below.*

The general result, it will be seen, is that instead of the twilight being on an average a quarter of an hour long, so as

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* The shortest twilight in 18 deg. north, is when the sun's declination is 2 deg. 24 min. south, that is to say, a few days before the vernal and a few days after the autumnal equinox, about the 13th March, and 29th September. It then commences at 11 minutes before five in the morning, and the sun rises at 3 min. after 6. Consequently its duration is 1 hour and 14 min., and that of the morning and evening taken together, 2 hours and 28 min.

The longest twilight in the same latitude, viz. at the summer solstice, June 20th, is 1 hour and 25 min.; for it begins at 3 min. after 4, and the sun rises at 28 min. after 5.

The medium duration from 29th September to 13th March, is 1 hour, 17½ min. morning and evening, or together 2 hours, 35 min.

The medium from 13th March to the 29th September, is 1 hour, 19½ min. morning and evening, or 2 hours, 39 min. daily.

The medium duration throughout the year, is 1 hour and 18 min. morning and evening, or 2 hours. 36 min. daily.

to make the length of the day, both twilights included, only twelve hours and a half; it is, when shortest, one hour and fourteen minutes, and on a medium, one hour and eighteen minutes; and taking the morning and evening together, two hours and thirty-six minutes; making the average length of the days two hours and thirty-six minutes throughout the year. The difference, consequently is about five to one.

Should it be said, that the Jamaica Report, in the passage extracted, did not mean to speak of the twilight with astronomical correctness; but had in view only such a portion of it as gives light enough for the labours of the field; I reply, that this explanation cannot be offered for those who rejected the twilight altogether, as most of the West India witnesses and writers have done, speaking of twelve hours in the twenty-four as *night*; nor could any impossibility of turning out or working the slaves in even the faintest twilight, have been in contemplation by the Jamaica examinants and reporters, since we are told by them, "that it was formerly done during a full "hour in the dark." But I desire not to quarrel with my opponents about terms; and am ready to give them the full benefit of any possible explanation, consistent with the facts of the case.

I admit that some portion of the twilight, from its commencement in the morning, and previous to its termination in the evening, is but a scarcely discernible glimmering, and a larger portion of it but a medium between clear light and darkness; though I cannot admit that the utmost faintness of its light forms a necessary obstacle to field-work, still less to the turning out the slaves from their huts, or their proceeding to the often distant place of labour; for this, as has already been shewn, would be untrue, and inconsistent with what is acknowledged to be, or what is equally conclusive, to have formerly been, the practice. Dr. Collins, too, did not caution his brother planters against an *impossible* fault, when he advised them not to turn out their slaves before the twilight was well ascertained; or untruly allege that the bell was sometimes rung for that purpose an hour or two before even the first approach of morning;* nor will *Mr. Dwarris* be supposed

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* See supra, p. 106.

to have falsely magnified a hardship he wished to extenuate, in telling us that the slaves still "*begin their toil* before day."*

I will nevertheless suppose, for argument sake, that there is a portion of twilight, during which the slaves cannot have light enough either to work nor walk by; or what will serve as well, I will suppose that the planters voluntarily abstain from compelling them to do so, when the light is not clear enough for every species of agricultural labour known in this country.

I am sorry that the proportion of the twilight in that degree obscure, cannot be ascertained like the duration of the whole, by mathematical demonstration. It can be known only by experience; and experience in a climate like our own, where clouds and rain, or fogs and mist, so generally darken the morning and evening atmosphere, and are rarely absent from the skirts of the horizon, when the sun nearly approaches or actually surmounts it, can teach us little or nothing in respect of such a climate as that of our West India islands, where the sun commonly rises and sets with cloudless splendour, and every twilight ray that precedes his appearance, or follows his descent, is shot upwards into an atmosphere so clear as to lose none of its reflection and luminous effect. All we can with certainty infer is, that whatever proportion the adequate degree of crepuscular light, bears to the inadequate in England, that proportion must be in a very high degree greater in the West India islands.

But there are means by which we may satisfactorily arrive at some approximation to the truth, without departing from my rule of using alone the evidence of colonial opponents. I shall be able at least to shew, that statements which reduce the twilight, even supposing what I have called *adequate* twilight only was meant, to a quarter of an hour, were extravagantly wide of the truth.

In the first place, the same report which tells us that the slaves work only in "*day-light*," which of course could be meant to comprise *adequate* twilight only, tells us elsewhere that the hours of labour still, are those limited by the Consolidation law. The Honorable *James Stewart*, Esq. a proprie-

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* See supra, p. 106.

tor, thirty years resident in the island, and member of the Assembly, being interrogated as to improvements within that period, in respect of food, clothing, hours of labour, and punishment, answered as to all but labour, in a way that shewed him to have been sufficiently well-disposed to do credit to the existing system, and to bring forward every assignable improvement within his long experience; but in respect of the point in question, his words are, "*The hours of labour are regulated by the Consolidated Slave Law, to which examinant begs leave to refer the Committee; and he believes the slaves are allowed fully the time prescribed by it for refreshment and rest.*" *

I will not stop to shew how decidedly the Committee and the House were here defeated by their own witness on the substantive point, the alleged abatement, in practice, of two hours per diem, out of the statutable time; which other witnesses also in the same examinations manifestly overthrew; †

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* Printed Report, p. 96.

† Two other eminent and long resident proprietors, *Mr. Graham* and *Mr. Richards*, while supporting the Committee's proposition as to the diminution of labour from 12 to 10 hours, attempted to make it out, not by any change in the time of commencing and ending labour in the field, to which alone the Act relates, but in very different ways.

The former (p. 56,) expressly says, "*with regard to the hours of labour, those of* ABLE *people are much the same as they were when he came to the island;*" that is, from day-light, which in this climate is generally from five "to six in the morning," &c. (adopting in part the sidereal errors here in question.) But he adds, "*the weakly people and children* are indulged, both "as to the time of going to work in the morning, after dinner, and in leaving off work in the evening; the average time that the able people work "will therefore be about ten hours in the twenty-four." (It is obvious that the word "able" in the last clause must be expunged, in order to make the testimony either intelligible or consistent with itself. It is perhaps an error of the press.)

Here, the resort is to cast into an average with the full labours of the adults, the particular indulgences of the *children and weakly slaves;* but to *their* case, this controversy as to the time of field-labour does not at all relate; and there doubtless never was a time when some abatements were not unavoidably made in their favour. Supposing them now spared more than formerly, the improvement is no ease to the adult and able slaves. In taking such weak and irrelevant ground, the witness shewed that he was

for my business at present is only to rescue the day-light from the amputations attempted by the reporters, and my other antagonists.

If the hours of labour are the same that were prescribed by the Act, then field-work commences at five in the morning, and ends at seven in the evening; consequently is carried on during such a portion of the twilight as amounts on an average to two hours; for the sun is so long on an average below the horizon, between those points of limitation. Either then, what I have called an "adequate twilight," exists an hour morning and evening, making two hours daily; or the work goes on during that fainter degree of crepuscular light, which the report, and the other authorities I am combating, call

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aware of no better on which his calculation or estimate of ten hours could be sustained.

Mr. Richards took another course. He said, the slaves, when he first came to the island (thirty-four years before), worked two hours more than now; but instead of shewing any such deduction from the legal standard, according to the assertion of the Committee, his statements, the usual fallacy as to the length of day excepted, shew like Mr. Graham's, that the present practice corresponds with that standard; and he, like Mr. Harris, finds the improvement, in ascribing to the former planters the having worked their slaves full one hour before, and one hour after the day; not however, in the cane pieces, but in "*making dung and carrying out grass*," (p. 71.) Whether such employments are now included in, or added to the statutable time of *field-labour*, my readers will hereafter be enabled to judge.

Thus we have the same proposition, that the hours of labour have been reduced to ten, maintained in the same report, from four different sets of premises, all as irreconcilable with each other, as with the truth of the case:— the Committee dashingly strikes out an hour and a half from the legal standard, by an alleged, but unspecified voluntary remission: one of its witnesses dropping that standard, and substituting for it the limits of day-light, finds the improvement in ascribing to former practice two hours of field-work by night; another finds it on the same premises, except that it is not field-work, but nightly dung making and grass carrying, that were the former subjects of excess; and a third, expressly admitting the hours of labour to be unchanged, contends, 'that as the children and feeble are spared, their less share of labour should be taken into average with the full time of the adults. They all however more or less eke out the measure of alleged improvement by detracting from the length of day-light.

I have not made a partial selection of these witnesses. I have quoted all who spoke with any specification, either as to the reduction of labour, o its actual periods.

night or darkness. On either supposition, my opponents are short in their reckoning of daily labour, some by two hours, and all by at least an hour and a half; and on the former supposition, we have found the proportion we were in quest of; for the medium of true astronomical twilight being one hour and eighteen minutes morning and evening, we have to strike off from each only eighteen minutes, or thirty-six for the whole day, and the rest, being in the proportion of five to one, will be a crespuscular light adequate to all the labours of the field.

But as my opponents may perhaps shift their ground, choosing the other alternative, and admitting that now, as heretofore, the slaves work in what they call darkness, I will offer another criterion for ascertaining the proportion in question. At what time do *free persons* in the West Indies rise to their ordinary employments, whether without doors or within?

Here also, fortunately, I have hostile testimony of no mean authority for my purpose. Mr. Dwarris has told us that "*al. "classes rise at gun-fire, i. e. five o'clock in the morning*,"* and he claims the admission of it from us anti-slavery writers, as due "*in common candour*" to his side of the question. It would certainly be highly uncandid in *me* not to allow the claim; for I well remember, that as often as I slept near enough to a fort to hear the morning-gun, I was awoke by that loud summons, if not previously roused by the plantation bells; and that all classes of free persons, the very indolent excepted, then rise, I am far from disputing. I could not, indeed, have affirmed with certainty from my own recollection, whether the gun was uniformly fired at five, or whether it was not a little earlier or later, when the centinel perceived the first glimmering of twilight in the east; but I doubt not Mr. D.'s statement is correct; and will therefore assume that five is invariably the true time of the morning-gun. To me it was like a warning voice to take care of my health and life; for without the use of all the horse exercise that the twilight permitted, my constitution would not have endured, that, to me, most enervating climate for eleven years, or a fifth part of that term, finding as I did

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* See Note on p. 106-7, supra.

more annoyance than benefit from exercise, except when the sun was below the horizon. Had the twilights been as short as the planters now pretend, I should have escaped their public enmity, and the poor slaves would have lost a stedfast, though hitherto, alas! very unsuccessful advocate; for a quarter of an hour would hardly have sufficed for taking the cold bath, which I always did on rising, and for dressing and mounting my horse. I should therefore have had no morning exercise at all. When invoked by an advocate on the other side, I may pardonably thus far depart from the rule of stating nothing as a witness, and add also to the admission claimed from me, the following facts;—that the morning twilight was long enough in general to afford me a ride of several miles at an easy pace, after taking the cold bath; yet, the slaves were turned out from their huts so long before my outset, that I generally saw them at their work in the cane-pieces when passing; and cannot recollect once hearing the plantation bells after I left my bed. If I ever did, it must have been very rarely. Of the evening twilight I made the same use, from the same necessity, and my rides were then often protracted beyond the final close of daylight, in its widest sense; yet the last living objects which I had light enough to distinguish in my way, were usually negroes carrying on their heads bundles of grass they had collected, or standing with them at the works to await the inspection of the overseer at the evening grass throwing. It is needless, however, to prove that the potential duration of work after the setting, must be full as great as before the rising, sun.

Mr. Dwarris and I then being agreed, that all classes (by which I understand him to mean, all who are free) rise at five, if not earlier; *for what purposes do they rise so early?* Of course not for the pleasure of dressing in the dark, or by candle light. It must be to follow their various occupations, whether active or sedentary; for the exercise of which, therefore, we may certainly infer there is day-light enough at that hour. Yet as the sun never rises earlier than twenty-eight minutes after five, and sometimes as late as three minutes after six, and on an average at six o'clock, there could be no such light for an hour on a medium, and for about half an hour

at the very lowest point, if the crepuscle did not give it. It follows then, from the astronomical data which I have furnished, that the duration of the adequate, is to that of the entire twilight, upon a medium as sixty to seventy-eight, forming little less than four-fifths of the whole. At the equinoxes, indeed, that proportion would not give adequate light quite so early as five, by a difference of about five minutes; but this is a difference far too minute to prevent our taking, even at those seasons, five o'clock with sufficient accuracy, as the latest commencement of adequate day-light, in an atmosphere where star-light is so clear that the planet Venus often casts a shadow behind an object opposed to it. The obvious general conclusion is, that the length of the day, measured by the duration of light, is for every practical purpose, fourteen hours instead of twelve, which some, and twelve and a half, which others of my opponents assign to it.

It may naturally enough be supposed, that I have wasted my own time and that of my readers, by reasoning so much at large for the sake of this conclusion, or that of its corollary, that field-work comprises eleven hours and a half of the twenty-four, after the repeated admissions of both by the Jamaica legislature; more especially when I add the recent and impressive, though tacit renewal of those admissions by the same authority. I mean in the correspondence between Mr. Huskisson when Colonial Secretary, and the Governor and Assembly of that Island, on the disallowance of the new Consolidation Act of 1826,* by which the old and still existing limitations of field-labour were meant to be re-enacted; for though the assembly applied itself elaborately to remove the other objections; his humane stricture on the oppressive duration of eleven and a half hours of daily labour in the field, is passed by without defence or notice. No man who considers the object and general spirit of those papers, can doubt for a moment that if the Assembly could have

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* See the printed papers presented to Parliament by His Majesty's command in the year 1828, p. 4, &c.

credibly stood by its own pretences of 1815, by alleging a voluntary abatement in practice of two hours, or one hour and a half, or even a much smaller improvement, the credit of it would have been eagerly claimed. It may seem even that I might have safely relied on Mr. Dwarris's admissions alone; considering the official character in which he lately visited the Island, and that he is both a Jamaica planter, and a champion of the colonial cause.

Certainly, had I no more to do than to satisfy considerate and impartial men, my labours in this, and most other parts of my work, might have been safely and greatly abridged. But when the reader considers the boundless and fatal credulity with which reiterated colonial impostures on these subjects, however clearly refuted, have been received by a large part of the British public during more than forty years, on the imposing authority of legislative assemblies, and their banded partizans among us, he will perhaps feel with me that I have a double duty to perform; not only to establish the true nature of the case, but to expose the fallacious and deceitful character of the means by which it has been hitherto controverted and disguised. With those by whom parties accused of odious oppressions, are heard with confidence as witnesses in their own defence, no ordinary impeachment of their credit, I admit, is likely to prevail. It may be in vain that I have in a hundred instances shewn their utter contempt of fair dealing and truth, by citing their own testimony and that alone against them: but the bold fictions last exposed, and the means of their exposure, were of so extraordinary a kind, that if not fatal to the future credit of colonial evidence on these subjects, it must be because the credulity which patronizes their bad cause has no possible limit. It is a bold figurative censure sometimes passed on a man who disputes notorious truth, that he would "*deny the light of day;*" but my antagonists and their witnesses have literally done so. In order to hide the true measure of their oppression, *the light of day* has been actually and seriously denied. During two hours of the twenty-four, they have "*put darkness for light,* "*and light for darkness.*" It was, I trust, therefore, no waste of time, to take issue with them on this point; and invoke not

only their own evidence and their own records as usual, but the sun in his course to contradict them.

Having thus, I trust, precluded all rational doubt of the fact that field-work commences in practice as well as by law, at five in the morning, and ends at seven in the evening, I return to the estimate of those further portions of time which are taken from sleep and from rest, before the actual commencement of the daily field-work, and after its termination. Let it be supposed that Dr. Collins's advice is now generally attended to in practice, and that the bell is no longer rung, or other awakening summons given, an hour or two prematurely, but strictly as he recommended, when the twilight is very well ascertained. The supposition is sufficiently favourable; for though, as he observes, there is difficulty in avoiding errors on the one side, there can obviously be little or none on the other; and it must be at the peril of the negroes or watchmen, or both, if they are called too late to muster at the proper place and time; but not if they are called too early. The latest moment to which they can be safely allowed to sleep is that which will leave them time to put on their clothes, to prepare themselves with what they have to carry to the field for the day, and to walk to the place of work, at whatever part of the estate that may be. The time necessary, on an average, for all these preliminary occupations, can be a subject only of loose conjectural estimate; but that half an hour or more, commonly intervenes between the coming out of all the individuals from their huts, and their general muster in the field, may be inferred even from a passage in "the West India Colonies" of Mr. M'Queen; for truth sometimes peeps through a crevice in the most finished edifice of falsehood. This writer, who has the inconceivable confidence to deny that the driving method of coercion, a practice which his employers still resolutely refuse to relinquish, has any existence, and to rail virulently at all who plead for its abolition, as liars and impostors, affects to refute us by the following statement. "*The persons called drivers, so far from driv-*
"*ing them to the field, leave their houses, and reach the*
"*places where they are to work, at least half an hour before a*
"*single negro turns out or approaches the place.*" (p. 256.)

The proposition thus strangely contradicted and refuted was in words, cited I believe from a work of my own, viz. that the slaves were driven "*to their work, and at their work,*" which he here pretends to understand as if it meant that they were driven from their huts *to the place* at which they are mustered before the work commences; a statement that would have been almost as absurd as most of those by which Mr. M'Queen has insulted the understandings of his readers; for it is manifest that if the negroes were mustered in that way, every individual, on turning out from his hut, must have a driver behind him to urge him forward. There must, in other words, be as many drivers as workmen. It was a miserable subterfuge, worthy of himself, to ascribe such a meaning to his opponent. But he here lets out in part the truth of the case, by noticing, for his deceitful purpose, the precession of the driver; who of course does not go to the field half an hour before his human team, merely to enjoy a soliloquy prior to their arrival. The fact is, that he goes there as soon as he can after the bell-ringing, in order to give the second call with his whip; thereby indicating the spot of the general muster; and stays there to note the times of the successive arrivals of the slaves, which vary of course with the strength or speed of each, or their quickness in turning out from their huts, and to punish on the spot, those who arrive too late.

Many of these observations as to the morning muster, apply equally to the evening dismission from the field, the twilight being equal in duration to the dawn.

It is after that period that the slaves, when not taxed, as we shall see they often are, with further work for the master, have to "plod homeward their weary way," from the most distant part perhaps of a large estate, to their huts; and subsequently to provide for themselves that evening meal, which usually supplies to them, as we have seen, the want of a dinner; and to provide also for the next morning's breakfast, if they are to have one.

Strangers to the case cannot easily imagine how much, and what various incidental employment, these necessary duties of the evening involve. The negro, be it again remembered, though he may be a husband or a father, has no wife or children at home to prepare his meals for him on his re-

turn from the field; nor has he, like our English labourers, money to lay out, and a baker's or chandler's shop to go to, where he can buy his food in a state fit for immediate use.

Even where provisions are supplied to him from the plantation stores, he receives them in a state neither fit for eating, nor for any culinary process, without much previous preparation. The most favourable case is an allowance of *flour*, or *corn meal;* but this, though leavened bread is a luxury unknown to him, must be kneaded of course, and made into a cake or dumpling, before he can boil or bake it. The articles more commonly served out, where vegetable food is allowed by the master, is unground Guinea or Indian corn, or maize, with their horny coats, or horse beans;* and upon these he must

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* I must not here anticipate too largely the subject of subsistence, which properly belongs to subsequent chapter; but as these statements may seem strange to many of my readers, I subjoin here the following extracts:— "It required," says Mr. De la Beche, "one thousand bushels of Guinea "corn to supply the negroes during the year; the average crop of Guinea "corn on the estate is about 1400 bushels, so that near two-thirds of the "labour expended in this kind of cultivation was solely for their own "benefit."—(Here we have the standing fallacy, that raising his own food is for the slave's benefit, not the master's.) "It used," adds the same writer, "to be the custom to give every negro on the property a *gallon of* "*Guinea corn* on the Sunday morning, when they had not been allowed the "previous Saturday for themselves; but in consequence of having had "every Saturday given them out of crop during the last year, they have "not asked, and consequently have not received, any very great assistance "from the corn store. About sixty persons, consisting of invalids, chil- "dren, the stock keepers, and domestics, receive a gallon of corn each per "week all the year round."—Notes, &c. p. 8, 9.

These are the words, not of an unfeeling or sordid, but of a liberal and benevolent planter, in his account of the management of his own estate in Jamaica; where, however, I understand that the slaves in general are supplied with no provisions except a few salt herrings from the master's store, but depend on their own grounds for support. If they are not on that account the worse fed, which I will not here enquire, their evening and other labours out of gang, are of course not the less.

As to the use of *horse-beans* in other colonies, I give the following extract from Dr. Collins:—"Horse-beans are given to the negroes on many estates "in the Windward Islands for their allowance. If ground into flour, or bruised "in a mill, perhaps no great objection would attend their use; but if other- "wise, they are an execrable food;—for as it would be troublesome to the

perform the process of trituration how he may; for no mill of any kind is provided: he must grind or pound them laboriously between such large stones as he can find for the purpose, before he can knead them into a loaf or cake for the fire; but more commonly, as appears from my last quotation, is content to boil and eat them husks and all. As to the cassada or manioc, it requires both to be dried and rasped, or grated into meal, before any further preparation of it as food; but this, with calavansa beans, and other native pulse or vegetables, on which the negroes feed, are, I apprehend, very rarely if ever, supplied by the master. They belong, therefore, to another and more onerous class of occupations, the gathering and bringing from the provision grounds, such articles of supply.

But these are by no means all the incumbrances on the period of pretended rest; for at what other time can they collect and carry home the wood they use for fuel, or the water which they want for culinary purposes, and to allay their thirst, on that and the following day?

Comparatively fortunate is the poor slave, especially in the Leeward Islands, who has a spring of water within two or three miles of his hut; and a great majority are obliged to resort for it to the plantation well at the works, where it is, for the most part, to be drawn from a great depth. If we add to these particulars of daily occurrence, the washing and mending their clothes, the keeping their flimsy huts and their working tools in repair, and the various other occasional occupations that naturally fall on men and women who are left in all such matters to shift for themselves, it will be plain

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"proprietor to dress daily so many of them as would serve his whole gang, "they are given out undressed; and it is left to the negroes to do the best "they can with them. Now beans being of a close and flimsy texture, "and requiring a great deal of time and cookery to prepare them for the "stomach, and your negroes having very little of either to spare, they are "swallowed half boiled, or quite raw; in which case they impart about as "much nourishment to the body as so many bullets," &c. He adds, "As "the negroes, contrary to an opinion which has been erroneously enter-"tained, are generally provided with very bad grinders, a great part of "the grain which is used for their diet is swallowed whole, and rendered in "the same state; of course it is eaten to little purpose." — Practical Rules, &c. p. 97, 98.

that much time must be wanted to supply their own necessities after the work of the field is ended.

It is by no means universally true, however, that labour directly and unequivocally for the master's benefit, even out of crop, terminates with their dismission by the drivers.

They then cease, it is true, to work *in gang*, the crop season excepted, till the following dawn; but they have various evening services afterwards to perform on the master's account, as well as their own; and some of them of a very onerous kind.

By far the worst of these solitary labours, is the tedious and fatiguing drudgery of *grass-picking*, Mr. Ramsay's account of which is already before my readers; and I have little if any thing to add to it, except a few explanatory remarks; and except that, as I waived all benefit from his testimony, because he was a foe to slavery, its verity remains to be proved.

Here, however, a distinction must be pointed out, of much real, though much more apparent importance. There are colonies, and Jamaica is one of them, in which this practice, though prevailing extensively, is not in its nature so onerous as in the Leeward Islands. They have so much land there in most plantations unfit for the growth of sugar, or on which there are not hands enough for extending to the utmost that most profitable species of agriculture, that most planters have adopted the practice of laying out artificial grass pieces to provide provender for their horses, mules, and other working cattle: and many of them have also penns or grazing grounds, where their sheep and other live stock feed; whereas in St. Christopher, and several others of our older and fully settled islands, almost every rood of land capable of raising exportable produce, has long since been avariciously devoted to that purpose.

Of course, therefore, there is generally speaking, in such colonies, no room for grass pieces, except at a height on the mountain ridges too distant and steep for cultivation, and where there is but a short native sward, fit only for a few sheep or goats to browse upon.

A consequence calamitous to the poor slaves is, that except in crop-time, when the cane-tops serve for provender, the

horses, mules, cattle, and live stock of every kind, not even excepting the sheep and goats on most estates, are fed exclusively on native grass and weeds plucked stem by stem by the hands of the negroes; and which they are obliged to search for in the hedge-rows, the ranges, the fallowed cane-pieces, and the steep sides of deep guts or ravines by which the country is copiously intersected.

As vegetation in that climate is astonishingly quick, especially in the rainy season, which begins about the close of the crop, these resources in general are much more copious than might be supposed; but when a short drought occurs, the slaves are often obliged to ascend high into the mountain grounds of their own or the neighbouring estates, to find the ordinary tale of grass; and on low-land plantations, many of which have no mountain ground at all, their task is peculiarly laborious. At best it is in a high degree oppressive; for the daily consumption of such green food by all the cattle and live stock of a plantation which have, generally speaking, out of crop-time no other subsistence whatever, a little corn imported for the horses excepted, must obviously be very great; and there is not a handful, or scarcely a stalk of it, that has not cost a stoop to some weary slave, besides long walks in its collection.

This work has been naturally, but most inadequately compared to the Egyptian straw-gathering; while in almost every other point, that ancient bondage, though called "an iron yoke and a furnace of affliction," affords a striking contrast, rather than a parallel, to the slavery of the West Indies.

The time allowed for this tedious labour of grass-picking in the Leeward and Windward islands, is, first, that noon-tide interval, not less falsely, in this case, called a respite, than a dinner-time, and all the twilight that remains from the dimission in the evening, to the "*grass-throwing*," as it is termed, the true close of the daily labour for the master.

Nor is this final process of very short duration; for as the individuals of the gang finish their respective collection of such bundles as they hope may pass muster, and arrive with them at the homestall, naturally at very unequal times, according to their different degrees of strength, and of success in their wide-spread individual searches, many of them of course must wait long for the rest, in order to a simultaneous

delivery of their bundles, at the same place. Yet the delivery is required to be simultaneous; for otherwise, the overseer, to whom the important duty of inspecting the bundles is assigned, might have to stand an hour or more in the sun, or in the evening dew, or in the rain, to pass judgment on every slave, as he successively arrives. That judgment, too, I admit, would, sometimes be more severe than it is, if this practice were altered: for when the general amount of grass is thought sufficient, the overseer is able to connive a little at the scanty contribution of individuals, who plead either the ill success of their search, or fatigue, or ill health, to excuse the smallness of their respective bundles.

The practice is, that when all the slaves have arrived, or are thought to have had sufficient time for the purpose, the driver, who always attends to punish delinquents on the spot, draws them up in line, each having his or her bundle or bundles on the head; and then calls out the overseer, who goes leisurely along the line, examining every load, and if satisfied, simply directs it to be thrown down on the general heap; but if not, orders the instant punishment of the defaulters, having regard to the degree of each particular deficiency.

This process being ended, the poor slaves may retire, to re-assemble in the field at two, if it be in the afternoon; or if it be the evening grass-throwing, to prepare that meal which their luxury, we are told, makes them prefer to a dinner. Perhaps it will be surmised, that they have rather a better reason, than luxurious self-indulgence for declining to dine, especially in the grass-picking colonies, when dismissed on a distant cane-piece at noon, and obliged to reappear there, at the two-o'clock muster, under pain of immediately feeling the smart of the torturing cart-whip.

But after reading Mr. Ramsay's account, and these further illustrations of my own, neither of which, by my agreement, are to be taken as evidence, the reader may desire to see them sufficiently verified. I will, therefore, here adduce again, the unimpeached and indisputable testimony of Dr. Collins.

"The picking of grass," says that writer, "in situations "where it is most abundant, is a labour more felt and regretted "by the negroes than others much more severe; yet, as the

" cattle must be fed, it would be advisable to assign a certain " portion of the land to the production of Guinea-grass; a " little sacrifice of interest, is better than a great one of negro " comfort."*

In another place he says, " The neglect of grass-picking, is " another frequent cause of punishment. On some estates, " it draws more stripes upon the negroes, than all their other " offences put together; as the lash seldom lies idle while the " grass-roll is calling over. It is to be lamented, that this " work is so essential, as not to be entirely dispensed with; " for as it is to be performed when the negroes are retired " from the field, and no longer under the eye of the overseer, " or the driver, it is apt to be neglected. Besides, it en- " croaches much on the time allotted to their own use; *and even* " *after they have with much trouble picked their bundles, they* " *are frequently stolen from them by more artful and less* " *industrious negroes, and their excuses, however just, are seldom* " *admitted to extenuate their fault.*"

After again recommending the substitution of Guinea-grass, or other artificial grasses, to be cultivated on spots to be allotted to that purpose, he adds, " However, where there is " no waste ground that can be assigned to that use, or at " least not to a sufficient extent to supersede the necessity of " picking the natural grass out of the hedges, or cane-pieces, " the quotas which the negroes are assessed ought not to be " rigorously exacted from them. They who make default " but seldom should be overlooked, whilst they who offend " more frequently, should only be compelled to repair their " neglect by bringing a double quantity at the next call. In " general they would do so, and you would profit more by the " fine than by the punishment, and your negroes would escape " the whip, which is too intemperately employed on this occa- " sion, as on others; but the misfortune is, it is always at hand, " and therefore supplies the readiest means of punishing; for " the overseer having such a summary mode of balancing " offences, never thinks of any other, which demanding fore- " sight, and taxing his recollection, would engage him in a " more complex system of government."†

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* Practical Rules, &c. p. 192-3. † Ibid. 204-5.

Though Dr. Collins does not expressly state that the whole of the noontide respite from the drivers is employed in grass-picking, and the subsequent attendance at the roll-calling for its delivery; such I think may be fairly inferred to be the case, from different passages in his work, in addition to those I have here cited. He says, for instance, in his advice as to the intervals in the morning and mid-day. "At noon they *must* "*have two full hours before they are summoned to throw their* "*grass*; and at night, if out of crop, they retire from the field "with the sun."* There could be no reason why the grass-throwing should be reserved to the end of the allotted two hours, except that they would not, otherwise, always have sufficient time for collecting and bringing it in, without too much hurry and fatigue. And if the task generally or often employs two full hours at noon, it cannot well be supposed to employ less in the evening, when the slaves have been fatigued with the whole gang-work labours of the day. In point of fact, too, the quantity exacted at evening, is generally the largest; because it is to serve all the stock through the night, and till the following noon. Dr. Collins says nothing as to the time of grass-throwing in the evening; but if the negroes "retire from the field, (i. e. from the gang-work) "with the sun," which is, on a medium, six o'clock, and where grass-picking prevails, they are I believe often dismissed thus early, it may be inferred that the grass-throwing is not finished on an average sooner than between seven and eight; and this perfectly accords with Ramsay's account, or shows at least that he used no exaggeration; for his words are "about seven o'clock in the evening, or later, according to "the season of the year, when the overseer can find lei-"sure, they are called over by list to deliver in their second "bundles of grass."

Mr. Ramsay, in the same account, may, when compared with Dr. Collins and most other colonial apologists, be thought more than sufficiently favourable to the planters; for he spoke of the evening grass-picking, we have seen, as beginning "*about half an hour before sunset*," instead of their "*re-*"*tiring with the sun*" from the gang-work. Here, however,

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* P. 189. We must obviously read "*should* retire;" but I will not correct the typographical error.

he was incorrect only in using general terms to describe what, though a very frequent, is a local and occasional, not the general practice. In St. Christopher, where he lived, the grass-picking is, for the reason I have given, pre-eminently tedious; and when the weather has been more than usually dry, it is often necessary, especially on low-land estates, to dismiss the gang from the cane-pieces half an hour before sunset, in order that they may have time and light enough to collect bundles sufficiently large. By no other writer within my recollection is a dismission by the drivers before sunset alleged.

And here I cannot but digress a moment to observe how fully, and in how many particulars, Dr. Collins's work, republished by an eminent colonial agent and apologist of slavery within the present century; and first printed at least *fifteen* years later than that of Mr. Ramsay, is found to confirm his statements, and give a posthumous triumph to the character of that very worthy, but much calumniated man. In a passage that I omitted before, he had pointed out this further occasional aggravation of the miseries of grass-picking; "On their return from a neighbouring height, "often some lazy fellow of the intermediate plantation, with "the view of saving himself the trouble of picking his own "grass, seizes on them, and pretends to insist on carrying "them to his master for picking grass, or being found on his "grounds; a crime that forfeits the bundle, and subjects the "offender to twenty lashes of a long cart-whip of twisted "leather thongs. The wretch is fain to escape with the loss "of his bundle, &c. The hour of delivering in his grass ap-"proaches, while hunger importunately solicits him to re-"member its call; but he must renew the irksome toil," &c.*

Let this be compared with the lines I have printed with italics in the last extract from Dr. Collins. Indeed I hardly know a single stricture of Mr. Ramsay's on the oppressive treatment of slaves, that has not since his death been abundantly confirmed by writers of the same party with those who hooted him into his grave as a libeller and a liar. His only crime was the holding up to public abhorrence in this

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* P. 70.

country, a system of which they now admit that his general reprobation was just; since they now confess that when he wrote, and for twenty years after, the poor slaves were barbarously oppressed, in practice as well as by law.

On the Saturday evenings, the picking of grass must by an obvious necessity be enforced to much more than its usual extent, to rescue the sabbath, if in fact rescued, from that burthen. When we are told, therefore, that Saturday afternoon is given to the slaves for *themselves*, or for the working their own grounds, we should recollect that there is this heavy incumbrance upon it for the direct and unequivocal use of the master. To exempt the sabbath entirely, thrice the usual quantity must be thrown the evening before.

The sabbath itself, however, is encroached upon for the same purpose, "no work is ever required of them by their master on "Sundays," said the council and assembly of St. Christopher, "*except the picking a bundle of grass on Sunday evenings*, "which usually (they had the confidence to add) does not "require half an hour."* They meant it to be supposed, perhaps, that the grass springs in more abundant quantities on Sundays than other days; not, indeed, altogether to prevent the profanation of that day, but to enable the slaves to perform in half an hour what costs them three or four hours daily at other times.

The reader may suppose that here, at least, there has probably been some improvement, since the era of alleged attention to the spiritual state of the black population commenced; let him compare, then, this admission of 1789, with the latest statement on the subject, of equal authority, on the colonial side, which I extract from the examinations taken and transmitted by the council of Barbadoes, in 1824, in opposition to the reformations recommended by the crown and parliament.

"It is usual, on most estates, for the negroes on Sunday "mornings to bring up with them a bundle of grass at eight "o' clock, and receive their allowances for that day, after "which they are never called upon to do any thing; and "Saturday afternoons are very commonly given to them—

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* Privy Council Report on the Slave Trade, part 3, title Grenada and St. Christopher, A. No. 9.

" that on some estates he has abolished the bringing of grass " on Sunday mornings, which, however, occupies a very short " time."*

Here we have the same difficulties as in the account of the evening grass-throwing on Sundays at St. Christopher. If there is but one picking on the sabbath, it must be equal in quantity to two on other days, unless the cattle and stock are put on short allowance. And what are we to understand by "*a very short time?*" If not nearly or full three hours, it would be a great and wanton hardship on the poor slaves to delay the grass-throwing till eight o'clock; as well as a needless violation of the sabbath, to make that the time for distributing their allowances. It would be to rob them without profit to the master, of the time that they might have employed, if earlier dismissed, in going to their provision grounds, or to the Sunday market, or in preparing for the latter after their usual time of rising, whether that was four or five o' clock. It is, therefore, a conclusion, not only the most natural, but the least unfavourable to the planter's humanity, that they cannot on an average gather and bring to the works grass enough for the use of the day, earlier than eight; in other words, this "*very short time*" probably employs two or three hours of tedious and wearisome work. In the usual style of these admissions we are told of "*bring-*" *ing with them a bundle of grass,*" as if they found it at their huts, and had nothing to do but to carry it, instead of having to roam over the whole estate to find and pluck it blade by blade. As this is the best case the Barbadoes council could dress up for use in this country, who can doubt that the acknowledged grievance of grass-picking is full as bad at this period as it was above forty years ago? The same will be found to be the case in every point; or at least in all that I mean to investigate, the economical oppressions of the system.

To this I will add another extract from an account still more recent, the work of June, 1829, to which I have before referred.† " Upon Sunday evenings all the negroes of both

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* Examination of Forstér Clarke, Esq., a proprietor of a plantation in Barbadoes, and attorney for 19 estates of absentees. Printed Report, 108.

† See supra, p. 29, 30.

" sexes, except the children, have to muster with a bundle of " grass for the cattle, which is cut from the open spaces which " divide the cane fields, and from other parts of the estate. " Upon some properties, this is required in the morning as " well as the evening." *

As the drudgery of grass-picking is from local circumstances, considerably mitigated in Jamaica, and perhaps in some other colonies, it may be thought that the field-negroes there have more spare time for themselves. Though I am far from denying the importance of that distinction, the effect of much abridging the entire time of labour may be questioned; not only because the gang is in consequence detained longer, as we have seen, in the cane-fields, but because the same diversity of local circumstances leads to a larger reliance on native provisions, and gives the slaves consequently more work to do at their noontide and evening hours, in providing their own subsistence, than in places where they are chiefly sustained by imported articles of food.

For proof of the former proposition, we need only to compare Mr. Ramsay's statements as to the times of dismission from the cane-pieces in St. Christopher, with those of colonial witnesses and writers, whose statements relate to Jamaica; for his authority, when on the extenuatory side, will not, I presume, be disputed; and he represented the noontide respite as well as evening dismission to be earlier, and the former to be of longer duration than any of the Jamaica gentlemen allege; making the field-work stop, according to variant usage on different plantations, at "*eleven o'clock, or* " *noon,*" and the respite to vary from an hour and a half to near three hours; and he dates the evening dismission, as we have seen, at half an hour before sun-set.† It would appear, therefore, that the noontide, as well as evening time of absence from the gang-work, is longer on a medium by half an hour at the least, making together one hour in the day, at St. Christopher's than in Jamaica.

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* Observations upon the State of Negro Slavery in the Island of Santa Cruz, p. 89.

† See supra, p. 70, 71.

Mr. Beckford, says, " that there the slaves *seldom* continue " in the field out of crop after sunset, which is never later " than seven." * And even Mr. Bryan Edwards was content to say, " At sunset, or *very soon after*, they are released for the " night;" he adds, " the drudgery of grass-picking so much " complained of in some of the islands to windward, being " happily unknown in Jamaica."† The latter assertion is one of the very numerous instances in which that plausible, but most disingenuous defence of slavery, called a History of the West Indies, has misled not only the enemies of the negroes, but their friends. I confess that I was myself in this instance, deceived by it; never having been in Jamaica, and not thinking it probable that the author, an eminent planter of the island, and long resident there, would have ventured to call a practice *unknown* there, if it had been in any degree commonly used. The fact, as I am now well informed is, that the distinction is rather in degree, than in kind; for though the slaves in Jamaica have not, generally speaking, far to go for grass, or to collect it by such tedious pickings as in St. Christopher and other islands, they have to cut it, when grass pieces are planted for the purpose; and when not, as is more commonly the case, to go through the common process of grass-picking as here described; except that from its abundance, that process is not near so difficult and tedious as in those fully cultured and dry weather islands; and however the grass is obtained, it is a duty of the slaves after their dismission from gang-work in the field, to go for it, and bring in their individual cuttings or collections to the homestall. The latter proposition seems to require no evidence; for how otherwise could the horses and other working cattle, be provendered at night?

But happily, even here, I have express authority on the colonial side, to warrant my giving the result of anti-slavery information, (for such I admit it is) without any violation of my rule. I refer to an extract before given from the Jamaica Report of 1815, (supra, p. 115.) where one of the witnesses,

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* Remarks on the situation of Negroes in Jamaica, by Mr. Beckford, p. 45.

† Hist. of the West Indies, vol. ii. book 4. chap. 5.

Mr. Richards, noticed among the evening labours of the slaves, not only the making dung, but "*carrying grass.*" It is true he spoke of these as labours which formerly employed the slaves an hour *after dark*, but it was in that point alone that any improvement was alleged or hinted in this respect, by him or any other witness; nor can any change be supposed that could have rendered the making dung and carrying grass less necessary than before, as parts of the ordinary labours of a sugar estate. They may be no longer performed *after dark*, though the various and vague uses of that term, and its correlatives, throughout the report, make it difficult to say whether any such change has, or even is affirmed to have taken place; but if grass is still carried by the slaves of Jamaica in the evening, it must be after seven o'clock; and in order to be carried, it must be first collected and formed into bundles, whether by plucking or cutting.

For these reasons, though I admit the drudgery of providing food for the cattle and live stock, to be less onerous on the slaves in Jamaica than in some other colonies, it must even there, form no inconsiderable addition to the daily gang-work or labour in the cane-pieces; and I am strongly inclined to believe that if the time it occupies could be ascertained, and added to the difference of gang-work time which I have noticed, the slaves of that island would be found little benefited by the distinction; except by avoiding in a great degree the innumerable punishments inflicted in other colonies for deficiencies in their bundles of grass.

This, indeed, is perfectly natural; because the grand practical principle pervading the whole system, and the necessary effect also of avarice long spurred on by commercial competition, is the exaction from the poor slaves of the maximum of labour, that their time and strength can, without certain and speedy destruction, possibly afford.

But let me now resume my computation of the actual time of labour. — It has been sufficiently shewn, I trust, that this, in the lightest season of work, would be most fallaciously and inadequately estimated, by counting the hours only of the collective labours of the gang, under the driver's coercion in the field; though such is the uniform rule of the colonial apologists; and it has been shewn to be the result of their

own data, that even this rule, gives, on an average, not less than eleven hours and a half in the twenty-four; except where the time is somewhat shortened in order to extend in an equal degree the harassing process of grass-picking.

What addition, then, ought to be made, in a fair estimate, for what we cannot call the voluntary, or unforced, but may define, in general, as the solitary labours of the slaves, in order to distinguish them from those of the collected gangs, performed in the presence of the drivers, and by direct compulsion?

Some of their solitary toils, such as their walks to and from the place of the morning and afternoon muster, will, perhaps, be undisputed additions, at least to the charges on their time, and abridgments of their rest; because they are unavoidable incidents to what the colonists allow to be "*work for the master.*" But I must take leave to differ from them in their common views of this subject; and to add also to the amount, what the slaves have to do for their own subsistence; though this is treated by my opponents as if it were mere relaxation and rest; or as if labour had no tendency at all to weary the frames of the slaves, except when its immediate subject is the raising or manufacturing of sugar.*

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* Though such views are too preposterous to deserve serious refutation, it may be right to shew that they have been and still are gravely and expressly maintained. They are plainly implied in all the numerous statements and calculations I have cited, which reduce the hours of labour to those which are assigned by the same authorities to gang-work in the field; or which count the time of labour from five in the morning to seven in the evening, deducting two hours and a half for breakfast and dinner; and many of them we have seen, expressly call all the rest of the twenty-four hours, time *of relaxation and rest.*

It may, however, be worth remarking here, that all the witnesses examined before the Privy Council, who spoke to the times of respite or relaxation, did so in answer to Q. A. No. 9, which was in the following terms: "*Are any days or hours set apart in which the slaves may labour for themselves?*" and that it was in answering this question that they carefully took credit, not only for the Sabbath, and two days or three at Christmas, and for an occasional Saturday afternoon out of crop, but for the two hours respite at mid-day, and for an undefined portion of time after the evening dismission; in other words, for all the time that the slaves do, or possibly can employ in raising their own provisions. They all, therefore, plainly

Not doubting that all my readers who are not slave-masters, will feel with me on this point, and think that the portions of time employed in the culture of provision grounds, or unavoidably spent in other occupations necessary to the slave's support, such as gathering and bringing home the produce of his ground, the preparing and dressing his food, collecting fuel, and drawing and carrying water, &c. ought to be included in our calculations of his daily toil, my only difficulty will be to shew, what in point of time is their actual amount; which, it is obvious, as to the daily respites from gang-work, can be averaged only by probable conjecture.

Let it be supposed that an hour must, on a medium, be wanted between the bell-ringing on the first approach of dawn, and the commencement of work in the cane-piece, and two hours for the various employments that must succeed its evening termination, before the slave can retire to sleep; and let it be further supposed, that only one hour of the two at noon is employed, on an average, in any laborious way, where grass-picking is not required at that period. This, when we take into account the walks to and from the field at noon, of all who do not lie down on the spot, will be thought, I trust, a very moderate estimate. We shall if so, have to add four hours per diem of solitary labours, to the eleven hours and a half of gang-work; making together fifteen hours and a half in the twenty-four: in which calculation I regard the breakfast-time as entire and absolute rest. But to preclude all objection and doubt, and take every thing below the truth, I will strike off half an hour from that amount; and suppose fifteen hours only to be the average time out of the crop-season, during which the negro is either at hard work in the field, or in bodily action of some other

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considered the slave when raising his own subsistence as working "for *himself.*"

Some of them went further, expressly giving the name of *rest* and "*exemption from labour,*" to that necessary toil. '*Sundays throughout the year,*" said the agents and planters of Jamaica, "*are days of rest which they have entirely to themselves.*" "Sunday," said the Council of Barbadoes, "*is a day of course totally exempt from labour.*" Yet see supra, 131.

kind, either for the master's immediate benefit, or his own support.

Were we to stop here, we should have a truly appalling excess of oppression. Even in this climate, it would be so; more especially if imposed on agricultural labourers; and at all seasons of the year. How much more oppressive, then, in the Torrid Zone, where the native propensities of mankind are so strongly opposed to arduous long-continued toil; and where the labourer, while working under the solar blaze, is subject to an exhausting perspiration, such as the English peasant is rarely annoyed by, even in our summer days. But the latter works on an average not more than nine hours, as I shall hereafter fully shew.

Much, however, of the sad story of the poor sugar-plantation slave is yet untold. We have hitherto considered only his labours *out of the crop-season*, when they are much the lightest in point of time. Let us next enquire what they are during that long-protracted West India harvest, called the *time of crop*.

We have before seen that the comparative severity of forced labour during that large portion of the year, is universally admitted; and that its diurnal continuance is quite unlimited by law. The meliorating acts have prudently got rid of the subject, by leaving it wholly unnoticed, and confining their regulations to the season out of crop alone.

During the crop-months, the planter's profits depend more even than they do at other seasons, on the quantum of labour that he compels his slaves to perform in a given time; for there is danger of much detriment, both in the quality and quantity of his produce, if the canes are not cut and ground, and their juice manufactured by boiling, with all possible expedition, as soon as they are ripe enough for the purpose; and the consequence is, that forced labour has no limits, but such as nature irresistibly prescribes. Both by day and by night the negroes are put to the full stretch of their physical powers.

Lest these propositions should be thought too strong at the outset, let me here cite a recent report of the venerable Church *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*. The Right Reverend Governors, who must have concurred, at least in

framing that report, will not be suspected of exaggeration; and yet it has the following passage:—"The task of con-"veying religious instruction to uneducated adults is rendered "doubly difficult in the case of the *negro*, who is kept to "hard labour at all seasons of the year, *and works during* "*the harvest with the least possible intermission.*"*

I have already shewn the former proposition too well founded; and shall soon prove the latter literally true.

To enable my readers to judge what the practice generally is in the crop months, I will here cite, as I have done in respect of the labour out of crop, a few authorities relative to different sugar colonies, and at different periods, from the first public enquiries to the present time; from which it will appear, as in the former case, that the practice is strikingly uniform throughout the West Indies, and has, during forty years at least, received no mitigation.

To begin with the Privy Council Report and Parliamentary evidence of 1790,

"Crop-time, our harvest," said the legislative council of Jamaica, "*may be deemed hard labour, as the work in the* "*boiling houses is continued day and night.*"†

"When I speak of the ease of labour," said *Sir Ralph Payne*, afterwards *Lord Lavington*, who spoke chiefly of Antigua and St. Kitts), "I speak of it comparatively with "that of a day-labourer in England;" (he had before made, as we have seen, that extravagant comparison) "and I "meant principally out of crop. *In crop time the labour is* "*certainly severe.*"‡

"A field negro," said *Mr. Campbell*, an eminent planter of Grenada, "is the same time at labour at crop-time, as out "of crop-time; but in Grenada and the other ceded islands, "we keep about the works and the boiling of sugar all night; "from which circumstance, we commonly divide our gang "into three spells of boilers, people to attend the mill, fire-"men, and men to carry out cane-trash. This work requires "the labour of from twenty to thirty slaves, according to the

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* Report for 1828, p. 55.

† Privy Council Report, Q. A. No. 36.

‡ Commons Report of 1790, p. 442.

"number of coppers that are boiling. These spells are changed "at midnight, so that it only comes on every third night that "they lose their *rest of six hours*, and when estates are fully "slaved, there are often four spells."*

Dr. Athill, a planter of Antigua, gave a detail of the number of slaves necessary for the various works at the boiling house, and added, "they amount, in the whole, when all the "work is going on with spirit, to between twenty and thirty "negroes, so that there are few left to cut the canes, drive "the cart, and do the other work, except on very well-handed "estates."†

That there were in this respect few "very well-handed," or to use Mr. Campbell's phrase, "*fully slaved* estates," was manifest from the statements of almost every witness to whom the standing question, whether the Islands were sufficiently stocked with slaves, was put. The last cited witness, for example, said in answer to a question, Whether the estates in Antigua were to his knowledge, during his stay there, properly stocked? "By far the greater part were not; some few "estates had perhaps more than they required."‡ And he further stated, that "on some estates the canes are cut one "day and ground the next, from the planter not having "sufficient negroes *to supply the sugar works and the field at "the same time.*"§ Yet Antigua in this respect was generally considered as one of the most fortunate of our islands. It is manifest, therefore, that the case of estates so "fully "slaved," as to supply four spells, must have been very rare indeed. If so before the abolition, it must of course be still rarer now. But as those who are still credulous enough to listen to the oft-told and oft-retracted tale, of humane improvements, may doubt, perhaps, whether some expedient has not been found to relieve the wearied slaves from night labour after the toils of the day, I will show what the practice still is, or was at least, so recently as 1825, on the decisive authority of Mr. De la Beche.

Speaking of his own estate, he says, "During crop time, "which generally lasts about four months,‖ the negroes are

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* Ibid. 139. † Ibid. 328. ‡ Ibid. 323. § Ibid. 339.

‖ This should have been about *five*, unless the other planters I have to cite, are mistaken, or there is something peculiar on his estate.

" in consequence of being but comparatively few on this " estate, divided into two spells, which relieve each other " every twelve hours, viz. at noon and at midnight; thus al- " lowing half the night for work, and half for rest, during five " days in the week; the whole of the remaining two nights, " those of Saturday and Sunday, being their own *by law.*"* (I doubt not he might have added by *practice*, too, *on his own estate*, at least while he was there). In another place, he says, " On sugar estates, where the negroes are numerous, in " proportion to the land cultivated, the people are divided " into three and four spells during crop-time: on properties " where the numbers are not so great, into two."†

Here, then, we have a clear admission that the case now is no better, if not worse, than it was forty years ago; even on the estate of this liberal and benevolent planter. Even *his* slaves work eighteen hours out of the twenty-four in crop time; and though he says they have the remainder *for rest*, he cannot mean, and I am sure did not desire to be understood, that they have six hours *for sleep*, before the renewal of their daily toil; for the twelve hours which he regards as *the night*, comprise the whole interval between their evening dismission from field-work, and the morning muster; and this, even if we should assign to both the hour of six, which I have shewn to be inconsistent with the most favourable colonial evidence, more especially during the summer solstice, to which the crop-months chiefly belong. Supposing, however, that the slaves who are dismissed from the field at six, and take then their six hours' spell at nightwork till midnight, are not mustered in the field till six the next morning, they obviously cannot have six hours intermediate *rest*, in any proper sense of that word; as they have their supper to prepare, and the other ordinary and necessary functions of the evening to perform, and to walk to the morning rendezvous in the field, after their brief slumber has been disturbed by the rousing bell.‡

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* Notes on the present condition of the slaves in Jamaica, p. 7.

† Ibid. 22.

‡ A new parliamentary document has, while I am revising these sheets for the printer, for the first time met my eye. It is entitled, " PROTECTOR OF

It has been alleged, as an extenuation of these oppressive hardships, that the more weakly slaves are commonly ex-

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SLAVES REPORTS," and is printed by an order of the House of Commons of June 12th, 1829; and as it incidentally throws much light on this subject of nocturnal labour in crop-time, I will insert some extracts from it here.

Some limitation to that branch of oppression had been prescribed by one of the ordinances, that of September, 1826, emanating from the local authorities at Berbice, but under the positive direction of the crown, which has legislative power in that colony. It fixed, as the Protector observes (p. 17), no express limit to any other than field labour, and work on Saturday night, which is directed to end at ten o'clock. The Protector, however, supposed, that by the spirit and general intention of the ordinance, the same limitation ought to be extended to the other days of the week; and finding the practice to be as often as planters thought fit, to work their slaves by spells through the night, without any remission of their daily labours either before or after, he submitted the point to the opinion of the fiscal, and king's advocate, the crown lawyers of the colony.

From the former he received in answer a very planter-like and argumentative opinion as to the necessities or convenience of the case; but no clear or consistent solution of the question arising on the ordinance in point of law; though he says, "THE LAW OF NATURE *requires a cessation* "*from labour at night after the toil of the day.*"

The *King's Advocate, Mr. Daly*, spoke more directly and satisfactorily; saying that, "as the ordinance regulated the time for field-labour to be "from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock in the evening, it was "never contemplated by its framers that the same slave should perform "his daily work in the field, and still be liable to labour during the night."

The question immediately arose from the complaints of four female slaves to the protector, that after having been employed in cutting canes in the field during the day, they were, about nine o'clock at night, after they had gone to bed, called up to go and carry magoss from the mill; that they were employed at that work all the night until ten o'clock the next day, when they had no "*tie tie*" (ligatures made from the cane trash to tie up the bundles of magoss) left to take the magoss from the mill; that they were then employed to put magoss into the sun to dry for the firemen. That about five o'clock in the evening (*i. e.* of the second day), they went into the field to get the *tie tie*, and brought it home. That they then went to the manager, and told him *they were weary*, and he answered, "Well, when the other people break off, you can go home." What that time was is not stated; but it may be collected from the rest of the case, not sooner than twelve at night. The next morning they begged the manager to let them have three additional hands to take away the magoss in

empted from the night-work. But granting this, what does it prove? Only that the extremity of watching and toil attend-

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the mill-house, "but he said no, and told them to go and cut canes in the field."

Such applications to the manager from the poor wearied females, who had had by their account, not more than three hours rest in thirty-six, may seem no great offence; but for this they were not only deprived of their Christmas holidays, a severe punishment to the slaves, *but kept in solitary confinement in the dungeon, or darkhouse, with both feet in the stocks for four days and nights.* This complaint was in part denied by the manager; but only as to the point of the women having been called up the first night at *nine* o'clock. He merely alleged they were not called till *twelve.* The following is his whole defence:—

"Alexander M'Donald, manager of Plantation Smithson's Place, having "heard the complaint of the slaves, Bella, Emma, Acconba, and Sybella, "denies the accusation against him for being called up at *nine* o'clock to "carry magoss from the mill on the night of the 18th December last; and "*with regard to their complaint of being in the stocks during the time* "*they were in confinement at the holidays,* says, he conceives it to *be in ac-* "*cordance with the regulations, and that he had the power to do it,*" p. 20.

He called three witnesses, his overseer and two slaves, who stated that it was *the turn of those women to take a spell,* and that it was at *twelve o'clock* not *nine* when they were called up. (Same page.)

Here we find that there was no pretence of *more than two spells.* The women had to take their nightly turn at the mill from twelve o'clock at least, though not from nine, without any relief from the field-work of the preceding or the following day; and were denied any rest on the evening of the last, till relieved at midnight by the other alternate spell with the rest of the gang.

But the examination of Sandy, the head boiler, one of the defendant's witnesses, is well worth a further extract.

Q. "When people work at the mill from the time it goes about at the "hours you have mentioned, (viz. sometimes at twelve at night, sometimes "at ten or eleven) until daylight the next morning, what becomes of them 'afterwards? *Do they go to work all next day, or do they break off and go* "*to sleep?*"

A. "*They never break off; they go on working all the next day.*"

Q. "What are the hours for boiling sugar on Plantation Smithson's "Place."

A. "We begin about four o'clock in the morning, and keep at it till "eight at night; we then go to sleep, and I have to get up at eleven to "see them pot sugar. This takes about two hours." (Here the witness apparently speaks of the boilers only.)

Q. "Do you go to sleep after this till four o'clock."

A "No. I have to see the coppers cleaned."

ing it are found to be such as the feeble cannot possibly endure. It is admitted that there is very commonly a want of hands to alleviate the general pressure by forming an adequate number of spells or reliefs. It would, therefore, be to wrong the understandings, and even further to impeach the humanity of the planters, if we supposed that they would have only two spells or reliefs, instead of three, or three instead of four, at the night work, thereby subjecting their slaves so much oftener in the week, to such long continued watching and labour, if they could avoid it by employing a greater portion of their gangs capable of such arduous service.

Q. "Do the other sugar boilers keep the same hours, or is it only the "head boiler that is required to see the sugar potted?"

A. "The other boilers are called up at the same time; but their duty is "to clean the coppers." (p. 20, 21.)

Thus it appears that the boilers have not more than three hours' rest, or rather three hours of *respite*, in the twenty-four; and another of the defendant's witnesses shew that the potters fare no better.

Q. "What sort of people are the sugar potters? I mean how old are "they."

A. "I cannot say exactly how old they are. They are young creoles, "both boys and girls."

Q. "How long were these young creoles employed to pot sugar on the "night you speak of."

A. "They continued potting about three in the morning, when they went "home to sleep." (p. 20.)

Such is the practice of night-work and day-work during crop in this colony.

Mr. M'Queen had the effrontery to assert, in 1825, that the former had been in general abolished. "Formerly it was a general custom during crop "to make sugar during the night. It is still *in some places* the practice, &c. "In a very short time night-work would be altogether unknown in the co-"lonies, were the planters left alone," &c. (p. 261, 2.)

The reader, I hope, will remember that the same statements were made to Parliament forty years ago, yet by this latest official document on the subject, the practice appears to continue in rather more than the former degree of rigour, even in a colony where there was a legislative ordinance, by the plain intent of which night-work was prohibited.

The Plantation Smithson's Place, was not the only one from which complaints were brought to the Protector; but he found it in vain to prosecute, even for the cruel treatment of the poor women on that estate. "I have forborne," he says, in his report to the Governor, "to press this matter in "the shape of a prosecution; being apprehensive of failure," (p. 18.) no unreasonable apprehension, certainly, as those who read the Fiscal's opinion, will admit.

The apologists of night-work, nevertheless, are fond of telling us that only a small part of the gang is employed in it; and Barclay's work, in its usual spirit, diminishes the number from between twenty and thirty, which was stated both by Mr. Athill and Mr. Campbell as its ordinary amount, to eighteen. It is added, that such was the proportion on an estate with two hundred *labourers;* evidently with an aim to convey the idea of there being so many effective workmen, though with an explanation, doubtless in reserve, that *negroes* or *slaves* were meant.* The inuendo to unwary European readers, is that the hardship is imposed but on a few of the many who are able to sustain it; whereas West Indians well know that in a gang of all ages, scarcely one third, deducting the drivers, tradesmen, and artificers, are strong enough for the heavier labours of the plantation, including the night-work in crop-time. With the same deceptious view, it is left unnoticed, that the eighteen or twenty-five in constant employ at the boiling-house, must be multiplied by the number of spells, in order to find the true amount of the labourers to whom night-work is assigned. Now the same author or authors, in an elaborate attempt to refute the Rev. Mr. Cooper, contend for the use in one instance at least, of four spells †; supposing which, slaves employed on night-work would, on their own deceptious enumeration be seventy-two; on the true one, about one hundred; and even the smaller number might be enough to prevent the exemption of one man or woman on the estate capable of sustaining the work. ‡

Let it not be supposed, however, that the exposure of these fallacies is at all necessary to support my strictures on night-work. If the numbers coerced to its performance, were less

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* Barclay, p. 416. † Ibid. 414-15.

‡ See the citation from Mr. de la Beche, supra, p. 139, 140. That gentleman had two hundred and eight slaves on his estate, as appears by the public returns; yet he fairly acknowleges his inability to muster more than two spells. If the curious attempt to refute Mr. Cooper above referred to, is thought to be founded in truth, we may see in it, that Mr. de la B. was imposed on, and *how*, in his own belief that four spells were in use on some other estates. They count double, it would appear, in Jamaica; making two spells amount to four. See the passage.

than they might be, so much the more inexcusable would be the practice. If the numbers could be doubled, then instead of *six* hours watching and work by night, after the hard labours of the day, which even Mr. Barclay admits to be their lot thrice in the week, three hours would suffice.

"The attendance of the spells, says Dr. Collins, should "never be so far prolonged as to disallow of their taking a "few hours' rest every night; as they can ill bear a long priva- "tion of sleep; and under such circumstances will doze at "the mill or coppers, to the great danger of their fingers, if "not of their lives. As to the weaker negroes, they should "never do any night-work; and in order to reconcile the "others on whom the labour will fall, to such an indulgence, "which will appear unjust and partial, you must make it up "to them in one way or other; either by suffering them to "remain in their houses later in the morning, or by some "addition of food, or if that be not wanted, by extraordinary "clothing, which will in general go a great way towards "the satisfying them.* It is impossible to suppose, after reading such advice from this long-experienced planter, that exemptions of slaves in the great, or strong gangs, or of any but the very weakly, were usually made under the ordinary practice.†

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* Practical Rules, &c. p. 184-5.

† That boys and girls are not generally exempted from these nocturnal duties, may appear from one of the descriptive passages of that new champion of the planters before noticed, who has assumed the guise of a novelist, (Marly, p. 39.) His hero is kept awake in his bed through the night by the various noises incident to the brisk labours of the adjoining boiling-house, and among them is enumerated "the squalling of near a "dozen of girls and boys, who were seated on the shafts of the gin, forcing "on the mules that turned the mill." These drivers are wholly omitted in Mr. Barclay's enumeration.

Here let me quote again the pamphlet of *Mr. Dwarris*. "It should "not escape attention," he says, "when speaking of the labour exacted "in crop-time (constantly dwelt upon by the abolitionists as oppressive "on account of its *uncertain* [he should have said *enormous*] duration), "that, as windmills are commonly used in the islands, there will ne- "cessarily be many days when the mill cannot work, for an unan-

Mr. De la Beche, while he admits, as we have seen, the severity of labour in crop-time, attempts to excuse the practice, as all other colonial writers, with a striking uniformity have done, by observing that the negroes are the best satisfied, and he might have added, like the rest, the healthiest also, at that season. He further informs us, that the negroes on pens and coffee properties, where they have no night-work, and no cane-holes to dig, and where it may be generally stated that the labour is lighter, consider themselves less fortunate than those on sugar-estates, because the negroes seem to enjoy crop-time; "at least," he adds, "they are decidedly more merry then, than at any other period, except Christmas."*

I am far from questioning the facts of this defence, or even the respectable author's candour in the use he makes of them; for he had been only a year in the West Indies, and then, as it would appear, only in Jamaica, where I believe the slaves are, in general, better fed out of crop-time, than in most of the other colonies. But there probably was not one among

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" swerable reason, because there is no wind." — The West India Question, p. 17, 18.

Does this gentleman, then, mean us to understand, that planters who have windmills, have not in general cattle-mills also, to be worked by mules or horses, when the former, for want of sufficient wind, or accidents, cannot be used? That would be often to hazard the partial loss or deterioration of their ripened crops; and is an improvidence, of which I believe there are few, if any examples. To have cattle-mills without a windmill, is a very common, nay, the most ordinary case in the Leeward Islands; but the converse of it, is one which, though I was for eleven years resident there, I cannot recollect an instance of; and I well remember that the common-place economical argument against being at the charge of erecting a windmill, of which a great majority of the estates in the Leeward Islands are destitute, was, that though it would save much cattle labour, and consequent loss of live stock, it could not relieve the planter from the necessity of keeping a competent number of mules or horses, as a safeguard to his crop, when calms or light winds prevailed.

Were there not this latent fallacy in MR. DWARRIS's "*unanswerable*" argument, it would still shew how hard-driven he was for some extenuation of the practice. To what would it amount, but that planters abate some small part of the hard drudgery of their slaves, when physical necessity compels them to do so? *I believe it, — and I believe no more.*

* Notes, &c. p. 8. 21. 22.

the many long-experienced planters examined before parliament or the privy conncil, who carefully added the facts of superior content, cheerfulness, and health in crop-time, to their admission of its severe labours, who was not conscious of two explanations, that would destroy the whole effect of that apology, one of which adds to the discredit of their general system. The first is, that the crop-months are to the inhabitants of the islands of all classes and colonies, the healthiest part of the year, and that the rainy and hurricane seasons, which begin after the crop, and terminate before its re-commencement, are those in which the epidemical diseases so frequently and fatally prevalent in that part of the world, usually occur. Diseases of debility, especially, which ill-fed slaves are naturally very liable to, prevail most at that season; and it is then, also, that they are most frequently exposed to be chilled by the rains, which fall in torrents upon them during their labours in the fields, drenching them through their flimsy garments in a minute, and most commonly when they are heated and copiously perspiring from the effects of their exertions; for it may be added, that this is also the chief time of the holing process, the severest species of their work.

The other and more important explanation, is one that the reader will be better able to appreciate when I have given an account of the general practice in regard to *food;* but he will, perhaps, anticipate its nature, when possessed of a further extract from Mr. De la Beche; "if," he says, "the canes "then, *i. e.* in crop-time, give them additional trouble, they "amply compensate themselves; for *they eat as many as they* "*please, and drink as much hot and cold cane-juice as they think* "*proper,*" &c.*

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* All the witnesses I have above alluded to were not cautious enough to withhold this latter explanation. I will not here anticipate the evidence I have to adduce as to the great penury of food out of crop-time, and which will make it highly credible, that the addition of a beverage so nutritious as the juice of the cane, must produce very powerful effects; counterpoising, perhaps, in general, the debilitating tendency of the additional labour and watching. Many planters, though they would not admit the inadequacy of subsistence out of crop, thought it advantageous to their cause to take

But let us enquire what the additional time of labour in crop-time actually is.

To suppose that the plantations in Jamaica, and the other colonies collectively, are so well supplied with slaves, that the number of spells they can commonly afford is three, will be felt, after the remarks and evidence I have offered, to be more than sufficiently liberal. I doubt not it would be very far beyond the truth. Mr. Barclay's *four* spells will be found on comparison, to correspond exactly with what Mr. De la Beche admits to be but *two*. But I will suppose three spells, for the sake of avoiding all disputable or disputed premises, and taking every thing of that kind at the lowest. I will also suppose that the law as to the exceptions on the nights of Saturday and Sunday, is (very contrary to what anti-slavery writers allege) fairly adhered to in general practice ; though we have seen that even the Royal Ordinance at Berbice permits working on Saturday night till ten. Still, after these ample concessions, the result will be, that all the slaves employed in night-work, during the crop, labour on an average, in that season, above three hours and a half in the twenty-four, in addition to their ordinary day's work.

My calculation is this. From six in the evening, to six in the morning, the time of night-work, is twelve hours, which with the deduction of the nights of Saturday and Sunday, as claimed by Mr. De la Beche, gives sixty hours per week ; and the six hours from Friday at midnight, to six on Saturday morning being added, the amount is sixty-six, which divided by three, the supposed number of spells, gives twenty-two hours weekly to each spell, or three hours and forty minutes, per diem, during an entire working week of six days, in addition to the daily labour.

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large credit for the restorative effects of the cane-juice during the boiling season. But the following extract from the work of their great champion, Mr. Bryan Edwards, may here suffice :—

" The time of crop in the sugar-islands is the season of gladness and " festivity to man and beast. *So palatable, salutary, and nourishing is the " juice of the cane, that every individual of the animal creation drinking " freely of it, derives health and vigour from its use. The meagre and sickly " among the negroes exhibit a surprising alteration a few weeks after the mill " is set in action,*" &c.—History of the West Indies, vol. ii. p. 221.

To find the amount of this augmentation on an average of work throughout the year, we must next ascertain the ordinary length of the crop-season.

The Jamaica witnesses we have seen, made it five months; and Mr. Bryan Edwards seems to fully confirm that estimate, for he says, "the canes should be ripe for the mill in the be-"ginning of the year, so as to enable the planter to finish his "crop by the latter end of May, except as to the canes that "are left to furnish cuttings or tops for planting." I am not aware that any writer or witness except Mr. De la Beche, has reduced the number of crop-months to "about four;" while it is stated by other authorities, often to extend to six. *Mr. Gilbert Franklin* for instance, stated in his evidence before the committee of the House of Commons, that "the crop of "sugar commonly begins from the 1st of January or February, "and continues till the beginning of June or July, according "as the estate is slaved;" and Mr. Campbell says, that "If "the estate is weakly handed, the crop must be begun as "early as the beginning of January, and continued till June "or July."

"Crop-time," (says Mr. M'Queen) "extends from December "till May;" and even Mr. Barclay expressly admits, that "the crop-season lasts about five months," (p. 417.) He adds, indeed, what no other writer has alleged, that there are necessary intermissions of a week *to put in the cane plants.* If so, it shews that there are no hands to spare from the spells while the boiling process goes on.

It will not, I presume, be thought, on comparison of these authorities, too large an estimate, if I take the crop-months as comprising in a general view, about five of the twelve; and if we spread the additional labour of three hours and forty minutes during that season over the whole year, the result will be an addition of more than an hour and a half, on a yearly average, to the fifteen hours that we have taken as the time of labour, or active exertion, out of the crop-season; making altogether about sixteen hours and a half in every twenty-four hours throughout the year; with the exceptions only, such as they are, of the Sundays, and two or three annual holidays.

To make the account clearer, I will recapitulate the different items, and place them in one connected view.

	Hours.	Minutes.
Time of labour out of crop, as limited by the Colonial Acts, and admitted to be the usage, from five in the morning till seven at night, deducting the two hours and a half for breakfast and dinner	11	30
Half of the two hours' interval at noon, employed in work on the negro gardens or provision grounds, &c., including walks to and from the field	1	
Mornings and evenings active employments before and after field-work, for the master or themselves, including going to and returning from the huts, estimated together at three hours, but taken at.....	2	30
Annual average of the extra nocturnal work in crop-time	1	40
	16	40

On the strictest review of this account, I can find no error in it on the aggravatory, but several on the extenuatory side. I have supposed one-half of the noontide respite to be time of absolute rest, and without even distinguishing the grass-picking colonies, where it affords no rest at all. In the crop-time, I have allowed nothing for the slave's own occupations after his dismission from the works at midnight, or six in the morning; and where the spells are but two, certainly the more ordinary cases, my computation of night-work is short by one-third of the truth. Indeed, it is much more deficient if Mr. Barclay, and the evidence on oath cited by him (p. 415.), are correct; for they state, that even with four spells, each negro has 18 hours of night-work every week; and I have taken it as amounting, with three spells, only to 22 hours.

I doubt not the fact to be, that the slaves have not in general so much rest in crop-time as five hours in the twenty-four.

That the work is at least *eighteen hours* during that season,

I am now enabled to shew, from recent and express authority; and such as may suffice, perhaps, to satisfy those who will not take the trouble of following me closely through the details here given and demonstrated, for clearer views of the subject.

Should any man, after all the evidence I have already offered, doubt whether the enormous amount of eighteen hours' of diurnal labour, between the tropics, is not more than avarice armed with irresistible power can impose, or patient human nature, during five successive months sustain, let him enquire for the Parliamentary papers *before referred to*, entitled "Trinidad Negroes," and printed by order of the House of Commons of the 14th of June, 1827, and he will find in it, (p. 33.), the following passage. "I feel called "on to explain more fully than I did, the opinion I gave as "to whether sugar-estates could be carried on entirely by "free labour: *I do not think they could, in the manner the "work is carried on at present, making large quantities of sugar "in a given time; in many instances working* EIGHTEEN HOURS "OUT OF TWENTY-FOUR; *which constant labour the free settler "will not submit to, &c. I have no doubt sugar-estates, carrying on labour from sun-rise to sun-set, might be worked by "them," &c.**

Whose is this statement? not that of an anti-slavery writer, but of Mr. Mitchell of Trinidad, superintendent of the free ne-

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* See the Parliamentary paper referred to, p. 33.

Nothing to this effect was said by him in his original examination; unless, which seems more probable, it was suppressed by the honourable Board, as not fit for its purpose. But the superintendant, it appears, had been examined at a former period, about eighteen months before, if the dates are correctly printed; and having then given an opinion, with which we are not furnished, as to the impracticability of substituting free labour for slavery, he thought it incumbent on him, it appears, to send, the next day, a letter to the governor, with this explanation of his evidence, as stated in the minutes; and the governor now laid it before the Board. Upon this Mr. Mitchell was called in again, and subjected to a cross-examination by his brother planters, the course of which marks the anxious desire of the honourable members to obtain some qualification of the awkward explanatory statement; and marks also, the natural effect on the nerves of a witness, placed in a perilous dilemma between regard to truth and consistency on the one hand, and fear of being treated as an enemy to the common cause on the

groes called American refugees, but a long-resident proprietor of a sugar-estate worked by his own slaves in that island; and be, it well observed, a witness called and examined on the spot, by a committee of the Insular Council, for the purpose of excusing slavery, and opposing the humane orders of His Majesty's

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other. With all his too natural dread of offence, the witness could only be brought to qualify the terms of his letter as follows:—

Q. "You stated in the same letter to the governor, that slaves on sugar-"estates worked, in many instances, eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. "Do you mean in these cases, to allude to the whole gang on the estate, "and to every day throughout the year?"

A. "I mean only in time of crop, and the people employed at the mill "and works."

Q. "Is it a general custom in your quarter, on estates, to make the mill "and boiling-house gang work in crop-time, eighteen hours out of the "twenty-four?"

A. "I do not think it is the custom at present, but I think it was three "years ago."

Q. "Do you know from your own observation, that this was the "case."

A. "I have been told so."

If the reader will compare this, with the extract I have given of his letter to the governor, he will agree with me, that the honourable examiners had better have left the matter where it stood.

It was a miserable expedient to soften down into matter of opinion and information, the positive assertion in his explanatory letter; and into by-gone oppression, what had been expressly stated as the *present* practice. Had it been otherwise, indeed, the explanation would have been useless and irrelevant. But when it is added, that the witness had been twenty-two years a planter, that he was and had been resident eighteen years on his estate, in the quarter of North Naparima, of which he was also the commandant and sole magistrate, (see p. 2 and 35), and pre-eminently bound, besides, as superintendant of free negroes, to be accurate on such a subject, this subterfuge to get rid of a palpable and notorious truth, well known not only to the witness, but to every gentleman who heard him, must astonish every man not so well acquainted as I am with the ordinary style of West India evidence on this subject.

Had there been the slightest doubt on the point, or any colour for suggesting a departure from the general practice in Trinidad, the witness would not have been let off so easily; and many planters would have eagerly come forward to contradict the statement in his letter, or to prove that the oppression had ceased to be in use; but though many other planters were examined, no other statement by, or question on the subject to, any other witness, is to be found throughout those long examinations.

Government. The general tenor of his evidence will shew to those who read it, that the planters who called him were not mistaken in supposing him a good friend to their cause; which was indeed also his own.

If there were nothing worse in slavery than this cruel and murderous oppression of forcing men and women to work hard in a hot climate eighteen hours in the twenty-four, surely this would be enough for its condemnation by every mind in which West Indian prejudices have not obtunded the natural feelings of humanity and justice towards their degraded objects.

I might enhance this general account of slave labour, by adding to its diurnal excess the amount of the time subducted by laborious occupations from the rest of the Sabbath. But this is one of the topics which I have declined to enter upon, it having as a substantive article of oppression, and as precluding the religious instruction of the slaves, been sufficiently discussed by other writers on the anti-slavery side. My readers, however, will not forget that the poor beings so mercifully overworked during six days in the week, have but a very partial rest at best on the seventh. But without taking this aggravation into the account, I have sufficiently demonstrated, as I undertook in the present chapter to do, that *slave labour is cruelly excessive in point of time.*

The general result of data wholly established by the evidence of my opponents, and of the calculations from them here submitted, is this, that the poor slaves have eighteen hours at the least, of coerced labour in every twenty-four, during the crop-season, and during the whole year on an average, above sixteen hours and a half. Unless the fairness can be denied of adding to the labour in gang under the drivers, solitary work, or laborious employments, directly or indirectly for the master's profit, or necessary for the supply of the slave's own personal wants, more than the estimate that I undertook to sustain, has been proved. Mr. Ramsay, forty years ago, averaged the labour at sixteen hours; and I have shewn its true present amount, after every fairly demandable allowance, to be above sixteen hours and a half.

My readers I trust will not censure the large demand I have made on their patience, in this very important division

of my subject. To establish conclusively the true ordinary amount of forced labour in point of time, was to fix a *datum* of pre-eminent value, with every man, who wishes to form a right judgment, either on the actual state of slavery, or on the credit that fairly belongs to colonial witnesses and writers as to the facts they allege in its defence. We have in it, a criterion simple, homogeneous, and intelligible alike in every region of the globe. Nor are we embarrassed in its application, by diversities real or alleged between places, persons, or times; for, however the treatment of the slaves may vary in different sugar colonies, and under masters of different descriptions, their time of daily labour, in all those colonies, or all from which we have any public evidence on the subject, will be found, when that evidence is fairly scrutinized to be very nearly, if not exactly the same. Nor is it alleged that in this respect, the practice of the more humane, differs very materially from that of the more rigorous planter. I recollect at least no such distinctions more important, than the giving or not giving a day, or half a day weekly, out of the crop-season to the slaves, in aid of the sabbath, for the culture of their own provision grounds.

The result of these investigations is much enhanced in its importance, because it shews the utter futility of all the charges of *indolence* against the much calumniated African race, that are founded on a comparison between the effects of their industry when free, and the products of their forced labour when slaves.

This is now the favorite theme of the planters and their controversial advocates. It is on this they mainly rely for averting all measures tending either to general or progressive enfranchisement. On this ground, they had the confidence to oppose at the Privy Council table, even the giving a right of self-redemption, to such slaves as might be industrious and fortunate enough, to be able to tender their full value as property, for the purchase of their freedom.

Ye be idle, ye be idle, was the answer of Pharaoh to the oppressed Israelites, when complaining of their heavy drudgery. "*They are idle, they are idle,*" is now the cry of far worse than Egyptian masters; and for the same odious purpose, the exacting by means of an unjust slavery, a merciless excess of

work. The special requisitions of God in the one case were resisted; his sacred laws in the other, are set at nought, by the same false and insulting pretence. The Egyptian criterion of idleness, was the not gathering straw to make bricks. The West Indian, is far more rigorous; it is unwillingness to work hard by day and by night, during sixteen or eighteen hours in the twenty-four.

If idleness may be justly defined to be the want of due exertion, we must fix the right standard of the latter, before we can fairly predicate idleness of exertions less in degree. But the colonists take a more convenient course. They are too prudent to tell us expressly how many hours daily they think a free man ought to work between the tropics; because if less than the labour they inforce on their slaves, their estimate would be self-condemnation; and if equal to it, might startle even the least considerate and humane; and suggest views of their practical standard, very different from those they desire to impress. They deem it better, therefore, to infer a want of industry from the productive effects of free labour, than from its positive or comparative amount. The Haytians are idle, because they do not raise so much agricultural produce, as an equal number of slaves; and cannot at all compete in sugar planting for exportation, with the slave masters of Jamaica, or Cuba. The free negroes in our own colonies, are idle because they do not improve their condition by labouring in the cane-pieces in competition with the forced labour of slaves. Such reasoning obviously amounts to a tacit assumption of the whole matter in dispute. It assumes, that the exaction of labour from the slaves, is not excessive; and that the returns given for it in subsistence, are liberal or equitable enough to equal the reasonable expectations, or at least the potential earnings in other lines of industry, of freemen working in the same degree for hire. As the case really stands, it would be just as rational to charge one of our own peasants with idleness, because his work does not equal in its effects that of a horse, or produce to him in wages what his employer earns by the use of his quadruped competitor.

There is one very elaborate defence of slavery, in which reasoning less sophistical on this subject, might naturally be expected. I mean the reports of *Major Moody*, which I have

before cited and described.* Their main object is to defend the colonial system, on the principle that slavery is necessary for the culture of the sugar colonies; because free negroes cannot be induced to submit to that degree of labour, or in his own favourite phrase, that "*steady industry*" to which the slaves are compelled.

To maintain and illustrate this doctrine, the Major brings forward numberless facts, alleged to be derived from his own observation and experience, not only in the West Indies, but other tropical regions, all designed to shew the want of adequate exertion, or "*steady industry,*" in blacks or coloured persons of free condition; and in his anxious depreciation of their industry, the time of *their* work is a measure of exertion to which he very commonly resorts. The very first *datum* therefore to be fixed by him for the purpose of his comparison with *slave labour*, obviously should have been the ordinary time of the *latter;* but his readers will be more successful in their researches than I have been, if they find that essential *datum* expressly supplied in any part of those folio volumes.

There is an endless iteration in various forms and details, both of statements and reasonings, tending to shew the value of one of his terms of comparison; but that of the other is no where that I can find expressly given; and there are many places in which it must apparently have cost the Major much trouble to avoid committing himself by some clear, or at least intelligible, statement on that subject.

This cannot but be thought exceedingly strange; more especially when it is added, that Major Moody affects to treat of slave labour systematically, and to write with the precision of a philosopher; in the developement of what he seems to regard as a new science; or a new branch at least of political economy, discovered by himself, which he calls the "*philosophy of labour.*" The defect will be thought the more extraordinary, because he is perpetually taxing his antagonists, the impugners

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* Supra, note on p. 48, 49. Let me here correct an error in that note, which is already printed. The colony, I now understand, in which the Major was long and extensively engaged as a planter, was not *Demerara*, but *Berbice*.

of negro slavery, with want of accuracy and precision in their premises of fact, and in their views and reasonings on this very same subject; and boasting of the great experience, and close investigation, that have enabled him to correct our errors. How surprising then that by leaving the ordinary time of slave labour undefined, he should have left out one of the first elements of his own calculations; the very corner-stone of his entire system!! It is as if Euclid had proceeded to compare right angles with other angles, without first shewing what a right angle is; or as if a writer on the rural economy of this country should undertake to demonstrate from his own experience, the superior advantages of one course of husbandry in comparison with another, and to that end should furnish us with numerous accounts and estimates as to the expences and returns of the course he disapproves; leaving those of the course he recommends, altogether unstated.*

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* The only passages I can find in Major Moody's Reports, in which he possibly may be thought to have deviated from this strange course of proceeding, are in pages 56 and 57 of the Second Part of his Report; wherein he attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of substituting free for forced labour, on the assumptions that free negroes will not work more than is necessary to obtain a mere subsistence, and that this can be obtained in a given colony by working land on their own account half an hour, or at most one hour per day. How then he argues are *seven hours* of further labour to be obtained by the *white capitalist* for raising exportable articles, without coercion? "It appears to me," he adds, "impossible to sup-"pose, that any previous habits of labour, or any degree of moral instruc-"tion, could ever have the effect of inducing any free negro, or Indian, to "work *eight hours in a day* for another man, in return for ordinary wages "in a country where the labourer could more easily obtain the same value "in substance, by working for himself only *half an hour*," &c. Throughout this part of his argument, he compares the assumed time of voluntary labour with eight hours per diem only of labour by constraint.

Here then, the Major may be supposed to have furnished by clear implication in one place, what ought to have been found by direct averment, or avowed assumption in a hundred, the important *datum* in question. He may be thought to have committed himself like his coadjutor in the same cause, Mr. M'Queen, as to the ordinary time of the slave's daily labour, and even gone much beyond that writer's bold misrepresentation, by reducing his *maximum* of nine hours, out of crop, to an average of eight hours at all seasons.

But I will not, without strict necessity impute to this gentleman, who

Having enabled my readers to supply this singular defect, in the "philosophy of labour," for themselves, and to understand what the planters mean by *industry*, I freely admit that *such* industry is not to be found, nor any exertions that at all approximate to it, among negroes, or any other men who are free. If less than this is idleness, the latter I confess are idle, and likely ever to remain so. I concur with the superintendent of the American refugees, that "free labourers will not work eighteen hours out of the twenty-four."* They will not work with what the venerable Society for promoting Christian Knowledge justly calls "*the least possible intermission.*"† In other words, they will not work themselves to death.

Nor will the disparity ever be small enough to allow of any competition on commercial principles, between forced labour and free. Strike off eight hours *per diem* from the five months of harvest, and six hours and a half from the annual average; reduce the labour to an average of ten hours in the twenty-four, and cut off all those additions to it fraudulently disguised in the case of men who receive neither wages nor food from their masters, as time of *rest*, or of "*work only for themselves:*" give truth in short to all the false pretences I have refuted; and it might still well be doubted, whether free men

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challenges repeatedly implicit credit to his testimony, on the score not only of his public duty as a commissioner, but on his military honour, that he meant to convey an impression so grossly repugnant to what he well knew to be the real fact of the case. He does not affirm, and could not of course mean to insinuate, that the slaves work no more than eight hours a day; though certainly, those who read the passage may naturally enough so understand him; especially as it would have been diminishing the force of his own economical views to reduce the slave labour to less than its true extent.

He certainly might have doubled the strength of his argument by comparing the short labours ascribed by him to the free negroes and Indians, not with *eight* hours, but *sixteen* hours a day; and preserved the precision of the philosopher together with the fidelity of a reporter, by stating the latter expressly as the average labours of the slaves; but that the planters would have been equally well satisfied with his official defence of their cause, is more than I dare venture to affirm.

* Supra, p. 151. † Supra, 138.

in equal numbers, would ever supply that long continuance of human labour that would yet remain for the slave.

I firmly believe they would not; because nine hours of work per diem on an average of the year, is all that is yielded by agricultural labourers in England; because *this* is much more than the utmost incentives to industry have ever obtained from free-tillers of the soil in any tropical climate; and because I am strongly inclined to think that the hardiest natives of the torrid zone cannot permanently sustain so much, without such a noxious pressure on their physical powers, as the self-conservatory instincts of nature imperiously forbid.

The time of slave-labour, then, when shewn in its truly enormous extent, is a sufficient answer to those who impute indolence to free negroes, because they cannot sustain a competition with it in the growth of sugar or other exportable produce. But the defence will be found much stronger when it shall be shewn with what extreme parsimony the slaves are maintained. If they work twice as much as free-men will or ought to do, it is, be it remembered, without wages; and the whole charge of their maintenance is, as I doubt not clearly to prove, not equal to one-fifth part of the wages or other means of support which a free-labourer may fairly demand, and by moderate industry in working for his own benefit obtain. In the grand article of human labour, therefore, the Haytian would have to contend with the Jamaica sugar planter, under a disparity of cost as ten to one. It is needless to add to such a contrast, his want of a mother country to bear almost all the charges of internal government in peace, and defence in war, to raise the price of his produce in Europe by monopolies and bounties, and to sustain him on every emergency, even by the sacrifice of her own agriculture, and her vital commercial interests, for his relief.

The dearth of free-labour for raising tropical produce is, on these views, so far from furnishing any excuse for slavery, that it is, in truth, one of the many baneful effects for which that institution has to answer. It has reduced human labour to so vile a price, as to shut out from agricultural employment in the West Indies all but servile hands; or confine the free at least to such branches of it as contribute little to the ad-

vancement of the societies they belong to, and less to the commerce of Europe. The same course, as I shall shew, has excluded, in a great measure, from the plantations, most perniciously to their soil, the use of working cattle, and those implements by which human labour is every where else economised, and its produce greatly improved. Is it asked why most of our old islands are exhausted, and their proprietors involved in almost universal ruin? I answer, mainly because they are cursed with slavery; and because men who can be forced to work, eighteen hours in the twenty-four, are in the views of a short-sighted avarice, cheaper than horses and plows.

But further to explain these truths, and for purposes far more important to humanity, I must now proceed to shew what the nature of that labour is, which has such enormous duration, and the barbarous means by which it is exacted.

CHAPTER V.

THE LABOUR SHEWN TO BE EXCESSIVE ALSO FOR THE MOST PART IN POINT OF INTENSITY, OR THE DEGREE OF ACTUAL EXERTION.

I HAVE already observed that the intensity of muscular exertion, cannot be measured, like its duration, by any general scale or standard. When we wish to give any clear ideas of it, either positive or comparative, we are obliged to resort to the effect produced. The same, indeed, is the case in the mensuration of mechanical energies; as when to shew the operative force of a steam engine, we speak of a four-horse or a ten-horse power: the known effect of the one, serves to measure and define the force of the other. So when we say, that a man has carried so many stone weight, has walked or run so many miles in a given time, or has threshed out in a day so many bushels of corn, we may form just ideas, comparative ones at least, of the easiness or intensity of his labours, because we know how much other men usually carry, or walk, or thresh out, when they exert their strength in the same modes of action. But when the descriptions of human labour in question are not familiar to us, nor the effects produced by them commensurable with any known standard, even this resort is in great measure precluded.

It is evident, therefore, that in the present division of my work, the same simple modes of demonstration that I have resorted to in the preceding sections cannot have place. I cannot establish or refute general propositions as to intensity or ease, by computing and comparing the effect of particular admissions; because neither the one nor the other have any determinate or clearly definable meaning.

Here, too, the restriction I have imposed on myself as to evidence, is more than ever disadvantageous; for when the propositions in question turn on matter of opinion or judgment, rather than mere fact, it cannot be expected that the case alleged on one side of the controversy, will often find any direct support by testimony on the other. When my antagonists state that the labour of the slaves in general is light or easy, or that a particular process is so, they evidently involve matter of judgment with the tangible facts of the case; and yet I am precluded by my gratuitous pledge from opposing to such assertions of those by whom the labour is imposed, the judgment of anti-slavery writers.

These considerations entitle me the more, in this place, to an attentive audience, while I endeavour by fair, though sometimes oblique, inferences from the hostile evidence I have to grapple with, to enable my readers in some degree to judge for themselves.

Here let me, in the first place, avail myself of the obvious general probabilities of the case. Is it likely that those who have carried the exaction of labour to the utmost extremes in point of time, have been abstemious as to the degrees of immediate exertion? The same irresistible force that compels a slave to watch and work eighteen hours out of the twenty-four in crop-time, and sixteen or more on an average of the year, might compel him as easily to exert himself during the time of work to the full measure of his strength; at least while the driver is behind him: nor can any motive of forbearance be assigned in the one case, that would not apply at least as forcibly in the other.

Is the assessor's motive self-interest? *That* undeniably is best consulted by obtaining as much labour as possible in a given time. I know of no principle in which the sugar planters are more unanimous than that celerity in all their operations, especially in taking off the crop, is essential to their success. The great characteristic of bad management, in their views, is the want of energy and despatch; and the standing excuse for it by managers, is the inequality of the gang or the *strength*, as it is called, to the quantity of cane-land under culture. Are we to suppose than that this defect, when it occurs, arises from a humane desire to spare the slaves

in point of muscular exertion while they are actually at work? That motive would rather dictate a reduction of the excessive time of work, than an abatement of its energy; and it is manifest that *cæteris paribus* the one must be inversely as the other. The question should be regarded as relating chiefly, if not exclusively, to such work as is enforced by the driver's direct coercion; and to retrench the time so employed would obviously be a much better, as well as more certain, alleviation, than a proportionate diminution of briskness and energy in the work itself, by giving to the slaves an earlier dismission, and so much more time at their own disposal, either for repose, or for those individual labours in their provision grounds, in which they are the immediate arbiters of their own exertions.

My inference then is, that the now-established long duration of the work, furnishes a strong presumption of its general intensity. As the incontestable practice is to take all that nature can be made to yield in the one case, less is not likely to be exacted in the other. The indiscriminate mode of the coercion may indeed, and I shall hereafter prove that it does, reduce the exertions, of the more robust slaves somewhat below the maximum of what their hardy natures might for a time at least afford; and the feebler part of the same gang, are pushed in an equal degree beyond what their constitutions can lastingly endure; but the driving cannot with any probability be supposed to be less urgent than what, upon an average estimate, the gang is thought able generally to sustain.

Here I must open progressively the different parts of the case which I propose to prove; and the statements in this instance must be my own; for I am not aware that any one of my fellow-labourers has treated this part of the case distinctly, and with due specifications. But though I shall state nothing but what I certainly know to be true, in respect at least of the Island of St. Christopher, where I long resided, I desire no credit for any proposition as mine. Let all that I allege be regarded like the statements borrowed in a former chapter, from Mr. Ramsay, as the mere speech of an advocate; and go for nothing, except so far as I

shall be able to bring the facts home, by the testimony of my opponents, to the conviction of impartial readers.

There are two ways in which labour may be too intense. The muscular effort may be too strenuous, or the movements too quick; and, with the exception of holing the land, it is in the latter way chiefly that the predial slaves, independently of the oppressive duration of their labours, are over-worked in the sugar colonies.*

"Holing" is the process of preparing land for the reception of the cane plants: for which purpose it is laid out in rectilinear trenches of considerable depth, which are divided into equal sections of about two feet square, and the work is wholly performed by the hoe. Its difficulty consists chiefly in the hard texture of the soil, trodden down in the labours of the preceding crop, and baked by the heat of a tropical sun during about nine months of an intervening fallow. The surface is quite impenetrable by the spade, and equals in hard-

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* It is but fair to notice, that in this part of my subject, I shall have to correct sometimes not only the misrepresentations of opponents, but the misconceptions of some who were sincere friends to the cause I support.

It is, as I before remarked, from domestic slavery, that strangers visiting the West Indies, must generally derive their notions of the ordinary state and treatment of negroes; the predial class, to which my present investigations almost exclusively relate, being brought very little under their notice. To the former, they may not unnaturally ascribe languor and indolence; because, it being a characteristic of creole families to keep a superfluous number of domestic slaves, they have for the most part very little to do. The field negroes, also, may often be seen working with apparent langour. It is a natural effect of their weariness after the long continued labours of the day; and it is in the evening chiefly that they are likely to be much under the observations of white persons, whether strangers or residents, who are not called by plantation duties to survey their labours in the cane pieces during the heat of the day.

But the main source of honest errors on this subject, has been inattention to the distinction above pointed out. Casting the hoe, and carrying loads, are the chief general forms of labour; but the former, in *holing*, the most ordinary process, cannot be rapid, because the exertion is great; and the loads being for the most part not very heavy, the quickness of movements has not excited the attention it deserves; though I shall prove it to be oppressively great.

ness those soils to which our labourers apply the pick-axe. The hoe, therefore, for effectual penetration, must be raised above the workman's head, and brought down with a vigorous stroke; and it will be found that almost every colonial witness or writer, who ascribes easiness to plantation labours in general, admits this large branch of them to be severe.

One of these writers, indeed, when speaking of it, suggests an ingenious extenuation; but in doing so, indirectly confesses that, to beholders at least, the work of holing is arduous enough to excite compassion. "When negroes become mas-" ters of their work," he says, "as much may be done by " sleight as labour; and a constant habitude makes that fa-" miliar, which, *to a looker-on, would be considered as a hard-" ship under which both spirits and strength must soon suc-" cumb.*"* That the planters deem the process of holing to be not only in appearance, but in reality, severe labour, is manifest, even from the apologies they offer for it; such as that the stronger negroes are those which are selected to form what is called the holing gang; and that they are very commonly sustained under that species of labour, by spirituous liquor.

"Holing," said Mr. Campbell of Grenada, "is the most " severe work out of crop."† "About the middle of August," said the same witness, "many of the strongest of the gang " (commonly about forty, more or less, according to their " strength) go to holing the land necessary for the following " crop."‡ "We often give them while holing," he states in another place, "twice a day weak grog."

Mr. Baillie's account is to the same effect. — "I have al-" ways considered the holing of land as the hardest labour " on a plantation; *and that is generally the principal part " of the work out of crop season.*" "It is always done by " the ablest of the gang, and the holing of land generally " commences in the month of August, and continues to the " beginning of January." "The negroes employed in holing " have generally a certain allowance of *bread;* and very fre-" quently spirits, mixed with water."§

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* Beckford's Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, p. 44.

† Commons' Report of 1790, p. 140. ‡ Ibid. 139. § Ibid. 188.

"The stoutest and most able," advises Dr. Collins, "should "work by themselves, without any regard being had to their "sex, for though men are supposed to possess, and generally "do possess, more strength than women, it is not universally "so," &c. "To your ablest negroes, therefore, which is "called the strong gang, may be assigned the rudest labour "of the plantation, such as holing, stumping or hoe-plough-"ing." "As this part of your gang," he adds, "is loaded "with a harder service, it will be proper to distinguish them "with greater indulgence. They must either have more "time allotted to their own use, or you must give them some "*extraordinary* food; some *biscuits*, and grog, with or without "molasses daily, or rather twice a day."*

That such should be the practice, and such the medical advice, may seem strange to European minds. That *bread* and *biscuit* are more than ordinary sustentation to hard-working slaves, though strictly true, is more than I have yet enabled my readers to conceive: and though a draught of ale or porter, we know, may not only enliven and animate the labourer for the moment, but serve to maintain his strength by its nourishing qualities; spirituous liquors can obviously promote the former purpose alone; and at the probable expence of permanent health and vigour. In the West Indies, copious perspiration abridges no doubt the temporary influence, and is likely to aggravate the ill effects of the subsequent revulsion. But where the efforts to be excited are strenuous, and very trying to the strength and spirits, such a short-lived stimulant may be useful, at least as a substitute for that painful and more enervating stimulant the cart-whip, by the effects of which the vital current may be sometimes lessened, as well as the spirits depressed. We might reasonably infer, therefore, from the means used and recommended, the severity of the exertions to be obtained. But I will not further multiply authorities or reasonings on this point. When planters admit any species of slave labour to be severe enough to be fit only for the more robust, and to require extraordinary artificial support, it cannot be doubted to be intense, in a positive, as well as comparative view.

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* Practical Rules, &c. 176, 7.

Other kinds of labour in the cane-pieces are severe, though in a considerably less degree than holing; and it is admitted, even by *Mr. Dwarris*, that able and cautious apologist of the system, that in a general view they are more toilsome than those of the English peasant. "*The field labour,*" he says, "*is truly represented as severe; but so is ploughing and hedging* "*and ditching in England, though, I admit, not quite in the* "*same degree; as agriculture here is in a state of greater per-* "*fection.*"*

The intensity of the labour of the slaves, in other cases, chiefly consists in the celerity of movements, with which they are compelled to perform it. In working under the drivers, not in line, as in the holing process, but in file, as in carrying out dung, or bringing canes to the mill, their motions, to speak in military terms, are either in *quick* or *double-quick* time.

Let me instance the operation of *dunging*, as it is called. The usage is to carry out the manure in baskets into the cane-pieces, which are often of very steep ascent, and to throw an equal portion of it into each particular cane-hole. Some of the colonial witnesses have alleged that it is previously brought from the homestall as near to the cane-pieces as carts can approach. If this were generally, and I am sure it is not, or at least was not, universally true, the relief would be but partial on many or most estates in the islands, that I am best acquainted with; for many of their more distant cane-pieces are too highly and abruptly elevated to be easily accessible by wheel-carriages. But to let this pass, it is at least admitted that the slaves have much of this labour to perform, and that the dung-baskets are universally carried on their heads. Many planters also confess it to be a species of labour comparatively, at least, severe.

"The manure used in the West Indies," said Mr. Tobin, "is not spread on the ground as it is in England, but is "carried and placed carefully round each plant separately, so "that wheelbarrows or carts could not be used for that pur- "pose after the canes are come up; but the manure is *gene-*

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* West India Question, p. 17.

" *rally* carried in carts, and made into heaps at proper dis-
" tances on the land before it is holed, in order to save as much
" labour as possible to the negroes."*

Question to Mr. *Willock* of *Antigua*, — " What part of the
" cultivation of an estate do you conceive to be most laborious
" to a negro ?"

Answer.—" Throwing out dung in baskets."

Q. " Describe the basket, the weight and the manner in
" which it is carried."

A. " To the best of my recollection, the basket with the
" dung does not weigh above twenty-five pounds."

Q. " When they are carrying this dung, do they do it with
" ease to themselves ?"

A. " They always work very cheerfully on those occasions,
" *for I generally give them grog.*"†

The reader will perhaps wonder that carrying a weight of twenty-five pounds, should be thought to require that the bearer should be sustained or exhilarated, as in the holing process, by spirituous liquors ; but my next quotation, which pre-eminently deserves his attention, will probably lessen his surprise.

Sir Ashton Warner Byam, a gentleman of deservedly high estimation in the colonial circles, was called as a witness by the West India petitioners ; and gave his testimony zealously in their favour, as the readers of my former volume may remember.‡ He was a man of distinguished talents as a lawyer, who had been Attorney General of the Leeward Islands, and he was a proprietor and practical sugar planter in Grenada, where he held, I think, the same professional office. A more intelligent or respectable witness on both branches of the case, the practice, as well as the law of slavery, could not be found or desired by those on whose behalf he was called.

Sir Ashton was examined particularly by the Committee, as to the practice of carrying out dung ; and the following were the questions and answers as they appear in the printed Report.

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* Common's Report of 1790, p. 267. † Ibid. 348.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 146.

Q. " Do you not apprehend that the work of holing the " land for the canes, and of dunging the holes, is a labour " which would be generally reckoned severe?"

A. " It is certainly the most laborious employment in the " cultivation of the land; and if it was constantly continued " through the year, I should think it harder than I should " wish to put negroes to."

Q. " Are you sufficiently acquainted with the detail of the " plantation labour, to ascertain the weight of those baskets " of dung which the negroes carry on those occasions?"

A. " The weight varies probably on different plantations, " and must vary according to the state of the dung used, " supposing the same baskets filled. I cannot speak with " any certainty as to the number of pounds; but the weight " is so little inconvenient to the slaves, who carry that and " all other burthens on the head, *that it is a pretty general* " *practice, as far as my observation has gone, for the slaves to* " *run, or go in a quick pace, when they are carrying the dung.*"

Q. " Do you then mean to say, that the pace of slaves on " these occasions is regulated by their own discretion, and " not by that of the overseers or drivers?"

A. " *I do not mean to say, that the slaves if left to themselves* " *would constantly use that pace; but conceive that the practice* " *would not prevail among the drivers, if it was found severe or* " *unreasonable.*"

Q. " Do you apprehend that that species of labour is what " the negroes perform with as much willingness as their other " common employments?"

A. " I never heard them complain of it; though I have no " doubt if they were asked they would prefer weeding of canes " or any lighter work."*

To the discerning reader, the style as well as the substance of this testimony will suggest very useful reflections; and teach him what glosses he is to expect even from very respectable men, when speaking or writing under the strong influence of prejudice, of self-interest, and of regard to their own credit as planters, in the accounts they give of this system. Had it not been for the cross question

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* Commons' Report of 1790, p. 123-4.

as to the drivers' coercion, put by an abolitionist member of the Committee, the very circumstance that constitutes the intenseness of the work, would have seemed fair evidence of its lightness; and when the respectable witness was driven to shew the fallacy of his own inference in that respect, he shifted his ground we see, and resorted to one not less fallacious; assuming that the drivers could and would moderate the pace as reason and lenity required.

As to the general moderation of the driver's exactions and discipline, the reader has already seen much, and shall see more hereafter; but that a practice which Sir Ashton himself described as universal, and a departure from which must obviously throw back the necessary business of the plantation, depends on the discretion of those executive agents, was a suggestion that I need not perhaps stop to refute. The drivers are bad enough, as many of their employers have often admitted, and still admit; but however they may abuse the discretionary powers they possess over individuals, the quantity of work to be performed by the whole gang in a given time, is not and cannot be in their arbitrement; but in that only of the proprietor or his manager, who calculates of course on the degree of despatch that custom has established. The driver, at his own peril, must see that the cane-piece is manured within the time allowed for it; and if the ordinary rapid pace of the dung-carriers is necessary for that purpose, to this he must obviously adhere, whether it is severe on the slaves or not.

As to the slaves not being heard to complain, the argument could weigh with European ignorance alone. To complain, even of extraordinary modes of oppression, and which the owner may be supposed not to have authorized, is a perilous experiment; but to remonstrate against what custom has established as the ordinary duties of the gang, would be regarded as mutiny, and punished not only by the cart-whip, but perhaps even by the musket or the gibbet. My opponents nevertheless often resort to such pleas, though they are just as reasonable as it would be in a violator who had gagged his victim, to infer her willingness, from her not calling out for assistance. Sir Ashton we see, admitted that the slaves would probably have expressed their dislike to this

labour if they had been enabled by a question safely to do so; and how indeed could he have said otherwise, after admitting that the work was severe? Yet in what could its severity consist, if the baskets as he represented were light, except in the quickness of the pace?—But the question of severity apart, we here have an admission which must be felt to be conclusive, that in this species of labour at least, the *running*, or *going in a quick pace, with the burthens, is the general practice.*

In respect of the alleged lightness of the load, the planters have varied much from each other in their different accounts; and as it is truly alleged by the last cited witness, that there must, from the nature of the case, be great varieties in its actual weight, I will not attempt to form any average estimate. The briskness of the long continued motion would be enough, even with the small weight of twenty-five pounds which Mr. Willock incredibly assigned to the dung and basket, to make the day's work extremely oppressive; and that such was his view is evident, since he considered it as the very hardest work of a plantation. I will only add the following paragraph of advice from Dr. Collins. "As seldom as possible should dung be "removed when wet; for in that state, to its own weight is "superadded that of the water, perhaps equally great; and "the negroes will be vexed by the drippings from their "baskets. — In dry weather, and when the dung is dry, a "a negro will carry twice as much of it, and with more ease "to himself than in other circumstances. At that time they "may be required to fill their baskets, and they will be less "harassed by the excess of weight than by the fatigue of "walking."* In the experienced author's judgment then, both are harassing; and the latter is so, even when the weight is not excessive.

We have now obtained another *datum* from which to reason as to the probable intensity of slave labour in general. I inferred it before from the oppressive exactions in point of time; and the admitted severity of forced labour in some of

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* Practical Rules, p. 195.

its branches, strengthens the same inference as to the rest. The common end being to obtain from a limited number of slaves all the exertion they are capable of for the master's profit, and it being established that he does not spare them in point of time, nor as to one or two kinds of ordinary work at least, in point of intensity, it is highly improbable that in the other operations of the estate, their utmost potential efforts in a given time are not fully exacted. Least of all is this probable in the labours of the crop season; when celerity of operation is admitted to be of the utmost importance, both to the quantity and quality of the crop; and when the duration of labour is so great that the attempts to justify it are rested on absolute necessity alone.

"When the canes," says Mr. Beckford, "are in a state of "perfection, they should be got off with as much celerity as "possible: for expedition, in the time of harvest, is of in-"finite consequence to the quality, as well as the quantity "of the produce. Should any delay at this particular time "be occasioned, a drought might consequently supervene, "which would make at least a daily, if not an hourly diminu-"tion of crop."* He proceeds to give further reasons for despatch; and shews afterwards, by animated descriptions of the different processes of the grinding season, that the principle is well followed up in practice.—"The labourers are "now prepared for the expected harvest, &c. The shell is "heard with a shrill alarm to call them forth, as it echoes "among the hills, &c. The overseer is anxious to give his "orders to commence the crop; he is the first in the field: "the driver follows with his knotted stick, and his whip "slung carelessly across his shoulder; the latter walks *briskly* "to the place of labour; the negroes follow, and he shews "them upon what part of the piece to begin. The tops of the "canes are now in a constant tremor, the yellow swarths are

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* Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica, vol. ii. p. 9. This is the same writer, whose remarks on the situation of the negroes, &c., I have before more than once quoted. He is in both works equally zealous in his defence of slavery, and the slave trade.

" strewed upon the ground, and *vigour and dispatch are ob-*
" *served in every body, and apparent in every hand.*" " The
" driver, with an authoritative voice, cautions them to cut the
" canes close, and not to waste too much of the top, &c.; he
" keeps them in a regular string before him, and takes care
" to chequer the able with the weak, that the labour may not
" be too light for the first, nor too heavy for the last; he in-
" timidates some, and encourages others; and too often, per-
" haps, a tyrant in authority, imposes on the timid, and suffers
" the sturdy to escape."*

Perhaps the humane reader will see nothing to admire in all this; especially when he considers that the poor men and women are thus kept to work all the day under the blaze of a tropical sun; not to mention their precedent and subsequent night-work; and that it lasts about five months in the year. But Mr. Beckford tells us, " that the time of crop, *particularly*
" *the commencement of it*, exhibits a very lively and a pleasing
" scene, and every living creature seems to be in spirits and
" in expectation."†

He adds, that " not only the negroes are alert and cheerful,
" but that the cattle and mules, recovered from the fatigue
" of the planting season, appear to be fresh and vigorous;
" nor do they seem to require the encouragement of the voice,
" nor to dread the thunders of the whip; for this instrument
" of correction, whether it be in the hands of the cartman,
" the mule-boy, or the negro-driver, is heard in either case
" to resound among the hills, and upon the plains, and to
" awaken the echoes wherever the reverberations of the lash
" shall pass."‡

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* Ibid. p. 47-8. † Ibid. 50-51.

‡ I almost fear that this description of West Indian pastoral music may suggest a doubt, whether I am not quoting, instead of an opponent, a friend in disguise. I, therefore, beg leave to exemplify the general spirit of the work, by the following extracts from this planters' concluding remarks, in defence of the now reprobated African slave trade.— " As the fate of the colonies seems to be now involved in the popular ques-
" tion of an abolition of the slave trade, I shall defer my observations upon
" this subject until the *phrenzy* of the moment shall be abated, and the voice

I do not mean to dispute this writer's assertion, that the slaves, as well as the cattle and mules, are all exhilarated and invigorated in crop-time, or at least as he observably puts it "*at the commencement*" of the crop. I have already noticed the cause of that phenomenon; and the extract from the work of Mr. Bryan Edwards, which I have given, may suffice to prevent any surprise from it; at least as to the biped labourers.

The effect of such an addition to the food of the slaves, as cane-juice, in countervailing the debilitating tendency of night-watching, and an increase of many hours in the diurnal duration of labour, will prepare the reflecting mind to believe what I shall demonstrate hereafter, the great insufficiency of their ordinary sustenance at other periods of the year. The same effect, from feeding on the cane-tops, appears to be more transitory with the working cattle, from Mr. Beckford's account; for speaking of their work in crop-time, he says, "What this labour is, their reduced and lank situation, will, "I fear, sufficiently explain." What are we to infer from this? not certainly that the labour of the slaves is not also much enhanced; for the contrary has been shewn: the obvious and true conclusion is, that the change of food is greater and more influential with the negroes, than with their quadruped fellow-drudges. The latter out of crop, are not left to raise their own provisions, at such scanty periods as remain between forced labour and repose. *They* have always had enough to eat, though of less nutritious food than the cane-tops.

It may be useful in this place, to compare the system of foreign sugar planters with our own. There is a striking similarity, or rather identity between them in almost every

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"of reason shall allay that tempest which a measure so replete with danger "cannot fail to excite;" and in respect of the slaves' condition, "I shall, I "hope, be excused if I dwell a little upon the *seeming* misery of their situ- "ations, and then contrast the subjection of their lives with the *needy inde-* "*pendency* of the poor of England." "The negroes are slaves by nature." "They have no idea of the charms of liberty," (Descriptive Account, &c. vol. ii. p. 49.)

point. Indeed, I am aware of no exception to the rule; nor is it strange; for if the common object is to obtain from the slaves the maximum of potential exertion; and if this has been discovered long since, (as I maintain it has by general experiment, and constant competition for the cheapest production of the article, throughout the West India islands,) it was natural, and almostinevitable, that there should soon be a general uniformity of means; more especially when it is considered that by temporary conquests and cessions, the islands for the most part have frequently interchanged their sovereigns and their planters.

I will, therefore, here introduce some citations from a French author of great eminence, M. BARRE DE ST. VENANT. I am well entitled, under my general self-imposed restriction, to cite him; for he was not only a planter, and a champion of colonial slavery, and of the slave trade, but one whose work was highly extolled by all the French colonists; and contributed not a little to lead on and confirm Buonaparte in the cruel and perfidious policy he adopted on the peace of Amiens for the restitution of slavery at St. Domingo, and in the other colonies of France.

I shall quote from the original work before me, published at Paris in 1802, of which I believe we have no published translation; but will give my extracts in English. — "The labour "of those who cut the canes has some resemblance to that of "reapers; but it is *much greater and more animated,* even upon "the smallest sugar estates, than upon the most extensive "farm, by the number and *the rapidity of the carts loaded with* "*canes, which arrive at a gallop at the mill,* by those which "carry the fuel (cane-trash) for the furnace, and green-herb "(cane-tops) for the cattle, by the number of the men, and "that of the labouring cattle." After describing the cattle-mills, he says, "six mules are harnessed to two levers, or "sweeps; *they set off at full gallop,* go round and give a "horizontal movement to the central cylinder, the cogs of "which turn the two others. They then insert the bundles "of canes between the cylinders; they pass and repass be-"tween them. About fifty barrels of cane-juice are expressed "during the day, &c. — It may be conceived from this, that

" the swiftness of the mules must be very great; in fact they " run over eighty toises in a minute.

" This movement is prodigious; but that of the boiling- " house, which is contiguous, is still more surprising. Under " an exterior gallery are two or four men, who alternately " work and rest. With the forks which they take up the " fuel with, they feed the furnace *without cessation,*" &c.*

I will add from the same author his account of the night-works and relays; as it will shew the uniformity of that species of oppression in the French, as well as the English colonies. " The grinding commences ordinarily on Monday, " and does not cease till Saturday at midnight; it recom- " mences on Sunday at midnight, and so continues till its " termination; and proceeds by day as well as night, with- " out intermission either of the movements or the fires.— " The workmen of the mill, and those of the boiling-house, " are fixed to them for twenty-four hours successively. A " like number of those who are in the fields come to relieve " them at midnight. In so succeeding each other they keep " turn and turn; and when the gang is not numerous it is " necessary sometimes that they return to the night-work one " day in three."

It would appear from this that three spells were the lowest number in use in the French islands; whereas we have seen that in our own, there are often no more than two, and that though, in computing the time of work, I have gratuitously supposed them to be three, on an average, there are probably very few estates which have so many.—" Some persons," he says, " have wished to divide the station (at the works) of " twenty-four hours into two parts, the one from midnight " to noon, the other from noon to midnight."—" The ne- " groes," he adds, (in the true spirit of our own colonial apologists,) " have resisted so wise an arrangement; it is " opposed to their tastes, their habits, and their nocturnal " courses; it obliges them to re-appear too often, and they have

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* Des Colonies Modernes sous La Zone Torride, &c., par M. Barré de St. Venant. Paris, 1802. p. 369. 371-2.

" preferred an arduous station of four and twenty hours, to an " easier one of twelve." " That," he observes, " which is " most surprising is, that instead of resigning themselves to " sleep or to rest, when the midnight has released them from " their posts, one may see them run to a distance of two or " three leagues, to pass the rest of the night in dances, or " orgies, with their mistresses, and appear in the field *at five* " *o'clock in the morning* to cut the canes ; the women as well as " the men." *

These passages, when stripped of their glosses and exaggerations, and reduced to their true import, contain nothing incredible or surprising. The choice is between a respite of five hours at the utmost every night, and unbroken rest during two nights in three ; and as during the respite of five hours the poor negroes would not have time to visit their wives, or mistresses, as the author calls them, who often reside on other estates, and to prepare, also, their meals for the same or the following day, they may naturally enough prefer the latter alternative.—Those English planters who have only two spells, do not and cannot give their slaves any such choice ; because as the same negroes have to take the spells every second day, they would have to purchase an entire night's rest, by watching and working for thirty-six, or rather thirty-seven hours, without intermission.

I say " rather for thirty-seven," because though I have taken six in the morning as the time of returning to the day-work, it was for the purpose of meeting the planters on their own admission, that each negro who keeps spell loses six hours of rest every night. In fact the field-work, in, as well as out of crop, commences at five, as this French author fairly admits. " In this instant, he adds, (i. e. at the midnight dismission) " the negro is the most free of human beings ; no modesty, " no decency, no human consideration, no fear, no moral sen- " timent restrains him ; the marriage faith is no curb for him ; " he is carried away by an impetuous passion ; the fatigue of " the day is forgotten, nothing stops him, he runs where his " desires call him ! The negro must be of all the human spe-

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* Ibid. p. 379.

" cies the being the strongest, the most robust, and vivacious, " for in the hot climates he is capable of the most extreme cor- " poreal efforts, &c. He will pass eight days without sleep, " and sleep afterwards like a marmott; he will pass from the " excess of labour, or of agitation, to that of inertness, or " absolute repose, without his temperament or his physical " constitution being altered." *

Thus did M. Barré de St. Venant attempt to palliate oppression by exaggerating the capacities of the unfortunate victims to sustain it; but he had no motive for over-stating the oppression itself; and neither in the duration of night-work, nor its intensity, the points for which I cite him, does he at all exceed the truth. In respect of the former, he falls short even of what I have proved to be the practice in the English colonies at the present day; as the reader will perceive if he turns back and compares with these extracts my citations in the last chapter as to night-work in Jamaica.

In respect of the nocturnal habits of the sleepless slaves, M. Barré's misrepresentation, the high colouring of a French stile apart, is only such as our own planters continually resort to. Like them, he ascribes to the slaves at large, that which is true only in respect to a few individuals among them, chiefly the drivers and headmen, whose robust constitutions and better sustentation, (the consequence often of their oppressions on their weaker brethren, the drudges of the field,) may enable them sometimes to indulge their passions, during a respite which the common herd of drudges can employ only in repose. If two or three among the former are known on a single night in the week to visit their wives or mistresses on a distant plantation, it is quite enough with these colonial gentlemen, whether French or English, to warrant such general statements as to the negroes at large. Such fallacies are their ordinary means of deceiving their credulous European readers.

The West Indian witnesses before the Privy Council, and the House of Commons, were not interrogated as to the celerity

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* Ibid, 379. 380.

of the different operations in crop-time; and prudently forbore to volunteer any statements on that subject. They all admitted in general terms, that the work at that season, was laborious; but left it ambiguous whether they meant as to its intenseness, or only its duration. One or two of them, however, gave comparative statements, from which much may be inferred confirmatory of the preceding accounts.

Dr. Athill of Antigua, being asked. "Is or is not *the cut-*"*ting of canes* one of the most laborious, services of the plan-"tation? Answered, it is laborious, but I do not think one "of the *most* laborious; it is performed with such *alacrity*, "and good spirits, that it seems trifling."* Whether any thing is meant by the *alacrity* of work in men with a driver behind them, except that they work in quick time, the reader may judge from the instructive testimony of Sir Ashton Warner Byam, which I have cited in regard to the carriage of dung;† and as to the good spirits, in crop-time, see my quotations from Mr. Beckford, and Mr. Edwards.‡ But the cutting of canes, is here admitted to be laborious; and this obviously must be, not from the vigorous stroke of the hatchet merely, which the same witness tells us, in the same place, the women are as equal to as the men, but from its brisk and hurried repetition.

Another witness, *Mr. Campbell* of Grenada, says "the cut-"ing of the canes is not hard labour," but adds, "*the feed-*"*ing of the mill, and the work done by the firemen,* are the "most laborious operations."§ Here the same remark applies; for there can be no great muscular exertion in placing the-canes, which are within reach, between the cylinders, or in forking bundles of cane-trash into the furnaces or copper holes, if done in moderate time. It is the celerity of the incessant operation that constitutes the fatigue. The rapid revolution of the cylinders as described by M. Barre de St. Venant, makes it necessary to supply fresh canes incessantly, and such is the quick consumption of the dry cane trash and

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* Commons Report of 1790, p. 329.

‡ Supra, p. 169.

§ Commons Report of 1790, p. 139.

wowra, that to feed the fires or copper holes with them, is like feeding a furnace with paper. The driving of the cattle also, and removal of the magoss, or bruised canes from the cylinders of the mill, must keep pace with the rapidity of its motions. Every process, in short, of the harvest is in general marked by what the planters choose to call "*alacrity and animation.*"

If the reader can still doubt, after fairly weighing the effect of these colonial authorities, whether the labour of the slaves is intense in point of exertion, as well as time, I would request him again to consider the probabilities of the case; remembering that the extreme duration of the toil, increased largely in crop-time, is not more within the compelling power of the master exercised by his drivers, than the briskness of the labour itself, that his profit depends most materially on dispatch and that the number of slaves, is admitted to be often inadequate, especially in crop time, to the necessary operations of the estate. The reducing them to six or five hours' respite in the twenty-four, and withholding even that portion of rest from the boilers, &c., would be still more opprobrious than it is, if we supposed that any possible increase in the briskness of the work might shorten its oppressive duration.

I conclude, then, from the evidence which I here adduced, which applies to all the most ordinary species of labour, and from this general reasoning also, that the toil of the slaves is for the most part intense, either from the vigour or briskness of their work.

To compare it, in this respect, demonstratively with that of English peasants, is not easy, for reasons which I have already assigned; but I can truly assert, that except in the bustle of our reapers in the corn harvest, (which one of my authorities admits is not so great, as that of the cane cutters,) I have seen nothing equal in this country in point of briskness to what is called the "*alacrity and animation,*" of negroes in many of their employments. I have often seen our agricultural labourers at their different operations, and if I were even to strike out of the account, the important power of pausing, to ease their sensations, or recruit their strength, at their own arbitrament, without feeling or fearing the lash of a driver, I should still say, that their labours are lighter,

because in general much slower, than those of the plantation slave.

But were this doubtful, the vast difference of climate would at once decide the question. In the one case, vigorous action is at most seasons compensated by genial warmth; in the other, the fatigue is always aggravated by the waste of a copious perspiration. This important consideration is by the apologists of the system most unfairly thrown out of the account. Because the negro can, and the European cannot endure, a long exposure to the broiling sunbeams, with little or no inconvenience in a state of rest, they assume that the same distinction is equally felt under arduous or brisk exertion.

"An European," says Mr. Beckford, "who would be al-
"most dissolved, were he to work beneath the vertical ardours
"of a tropic sun, does not always consider, when he expresses
"his surprise that the negroes should be obliged to labour in
"such an intensity of heat, that the climate is congenial to
"their natural feelings, and that the careful benevolence of
"Providence has thickened their skins, to enable them to
"bear, what would otherwise be insufferable: he is too apt
"to judge of their constitutions and feelings by his own."*

Yes, a benevolent Providence has enabled them, as I have before admitted, to bear an exposure to the sun; because that is the lot of their nativity; but not to endure, without noxious effects, excess of labour, though in their native climate, because from this, the same Providence has naturally exempted them by the luxuriant fertility of the soil. It is not nature, but the selfishness, the avarice and oppression of their fellow-men, which alone can make it necessary; and from such sources of evil it has not pleased the Almighty to guard his creatures in this probationary state.

Do these writers wish us to believe that the negro is not, like the white man, subject to a noxious waste of the fluids by brisk motion and excessive heat united? Or is it required that I should prove this law of our common nature also, by the testimony of their own partizans? If it be, I am able

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* Descriptive Account of Jamaica, vol. ii. 66, 66.

to do so. Doctor Collins, in noticing the sudden check of perspiration as a frequent cause of the maladies of the slaves, says the effect is "to check the *perspiration, which descends* "*in torrents when the negroes are in health and at work.*"*

Surely then, it is right, in this respect at least, to "judge of "the constitutions and feelings of these poor creatures by our "own," though such sympathies are repressed by their masters; and to add to the enormous duration, and the intensity of their work, the exhausting influence of the climate, in the estimate we form of their sufferings.

I will not dismiss this branch of my subject without again confessing, that some of my fellow-labourers have adopted views of it different from my own; alleging that the enormous protraction of the work unavoidably diminishes the energy with which it is performed; and one or two anti-slavery writers have pushed that plausible theory so far as to contend, that what is gained in time is lost in effect, and that free men exerting themselves willingly, will perform in a given time more work than slaves.

Those who have held such opinions were, with only two exceptions that I recollect, personally strangers to the system; and all of them practically so; and, therefore, perhaps did not estimate sufficiently high the efficacy of the driving whip. They were also naturally willing to adopt and propagate views that tended to reconcile the disuse of brutal coercion with the self-interest of the planters. Nor can it be altogether untrue, that the slaves often work, with comparative languor at least, in the more laborious toils of the field, after they have been long continued; for weariness and exhaustion, when felt by the gang at large, will naturally relax the common exertions, in spite of all that the terror of the driver's voice, or actual inflictions of his whip, can do to prevent it. The frequent practice of giving the extraordinary nutrition of a piece of bread or a ship biscuit and a draught of grog, to recruit the strength and raise the spirits of the slaves under those heavier operations, sufficiently proves that this is found to be the case. Neither is it to be denied, that there is a most improvident waste of work and diminution of its general effect, through

* Practical Rules, &c., p. 58.

the heedless and indiscriminate way in which it is exacted, and the neglect of mechanical aids. The slave, I admit, if arbiter of his own exertions, might economise them so as to produce in a given time a greater effect with much less fatigue.

But no deduction that can reasonably be made on any or all of these grounds, will serve so far to reduce the general energies of slave-labour, in regard at least to the actual pressure on the workmen, as to make them bear any comparison with the greatest ordinary exertions of free men in similar kinds of labour, either in this or any other country. The disparity in point of time, however, is at once the most important, and the most susceptible of clear investigation. This, therefore, I shall proceed to demonstrate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

COMPARISON OF THE AMOUNT OF SLAVE LABOUR ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS, WITH THAT OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN ENGLAND.

THOUGH I maintain, and I trust have proved, that the labours of the slaves are, for the most part, excessive in point of intensity, as well as cruelly so in point of time, it is in the latter respect alone, that I propose to compare them with those of our English peasants; because, for reasons already assigned, it is in point of time alone that the positive amount of each can be measured or defined; and consequently the difference between them clearly ascertained.

It will be recollected, I hope, that the strange comparison between the most oppressed and degraded beings that the sun ever saw, and the peasantry of England, was no idle choice of mine; but what the planters and their advocates have been bold enough to challenge. Their folly, however, in provoking it, and especially in that worst article of their practical oppression, a murderous excess of labour, is so surprising, that it may be right to shew, by some further quotations, how frequent such temerity has been, and still is among them; lest I should be suspected of using unfairly against the many, the extreme rashness of the few.

"The work of the negro slave in Jamaica," said the agent aud planters of that island before the Committee of Privy Council, "is far less than that of a labourer in Britain."*

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* Privy Council Report, part 3, title Jamaica, Q. A. No. 36.

Q. to *Mr. Gilbert Francklyn.* "Upon consideration of food, "labour, &c., have you been able to make any comparison "between the condition of negroes in the West Indies, and "that of poor labourers in this country," &c.?

A. "I do not conceive that the poor of any country are "better provided for, or live happier, than the generality "of negroes upon plantations in the West Indies; *their labour* "*is slight*," &c.*

Q. to *Mr. James Baillie.* "In general is the labour of the "slaves proportioned to their ability, or can it be considered "as severe?"

A. "It is always in proportion to their ability, and cannot "be considered as severe, when compared to the labour of the "lower order of people in Europe.† On the whole I am con-"vinced, that the labour of a negro slave, taken throughout "the whole year, is by no means so severe as that of an "English labourer."‡

See also the evidence of *Sir Ralph Payne*, afterwards *Lord Lavington*, formerly quoted expressly and strongly to the same effect.§

These statements were made, be it remembered, at a time which the recent champions of the colonies, and the Jamaica Assembly itself, admit to have been a period of much indefensible severity in the treatment of slaves; and when, among other now repudiated oppressions, they are admitted to have been worked to excess. Is it then also admitted by my present antagonists, that the comparison with English labourers must, in respect to that period at least, be abandoned? By no means: they insist upon it still; and are so far from retracting the statements of 1790 which I have cited, as untrue in respect of the then existing case, that they quote them triumphantly, as the testimony of respectable witnesses given before Parliament, and worthy therefore of peculiar credit. Nay, that Goliah of the colonial host, Mr. M'Queen, arraigns me and my fellow labourers of unfairness, in not always bringing forward this former evidence, on the very point now in question. "*The labour of the slaves*," he says, "*is child's*

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* Commons Report of 1790, p. 91-2. † Ibid. 187.

‡ Evidence of Mr. Tobin, same Report, 266. § Supra, p. 22, 23.

"*play, compared to the work performed by the labourers in* "*this country. They do not know what hard labour is;* and "it is not a little remarkable, that the enemies of the colonies "are now bringing forward in support of their theories, that "very evidence taken before Parliament, which they formerly "either concealed or denied, which went to prove, that one "European free man *did as much work in one day as three* "*negroes.*"*

Should any reader still doubt, whether I am fairly taking issue with my opponents in general of the present day, on these bold comparative statements, I need only refer him to the printed Report of the Council of Barbadoes of July 22, 1823, published and widely circulated by their agent here in the following year, in which it is maintained as stoutly as ever, that the condition of the slave is not only equal in point of comfort, but superior to, that of the labouring class in this country.†

In fact, few colonial witnesses, or writers, among the many who have spoken and written on the subject in any stage of the controversy, have been prudent enough not to challenge or invite the same extravagant comparison. One of the latest of them, Mr. Dwarris, has alone, I think, noticed the topic with a discreet forbearance, by saying, "I am not of the num- "ber of those who will compare the predial slave to the "English labourer, in the latter's day of manly health and "strength."‡

Let me proceed then to take up this gage thrown down by almost all my antagonists, and to state what are the ordinary portions of working time, which the best wages obtain from the ablest agricultural labourers in England.

Most of my readers probably know well what these customary portions are. But from a desire to obtain the most accurate and particular information on the subject, for the use of those who are not conversant with rural affairs, I wrote for it long since to two gentlemen of landed property, and much intelligence, the one in Cambridgeshire, the other in Leicestershire,

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* West India Colonies, &c. p. 258-9.

† Report of a Committee of the Council of Barbadoes, published by Sior, London, 1824, p. 23-4, &c.

‡ The West India Question, &c., p. 20.

both experienced farmers on their own estates; and their accounts received by me in answer, agree in the following statement; which I will, therefore, transcribe.

"The time which the day-labourers in husbandry usually "continue at their work, may on an average throughout the "year, be estimated at nine hours per diem."

"From Michaelmas to Christmas, making allowance for "the different lengths of the days, they come to their work, "one day with another, at seven in the morning, and leave it "at five in the afternoon. Deducting two hours and a half "for meals, going, and coming, there will remain seven hours "and a half of clear labour. The same estimate may be made "for the following quarter. From Lady-day to Midsummer, "they come to their work at six o'clock, and leave it at the "same hour in the evening; but as the season is warmer, "they are a longer time absent from their work (about three "hours), which will leave nine hours for work. In the other "quarters, as the hay-season and the harvest comprehend the "greater part of it, their wages are considerably higher, and "more work is done; and it may fairly be estimated that "from Midsummer to Michaelmas, a labourer, after all de-"ductions for meals, going and coming, and every other cause "of absence, is twelve hours at his work, one day with ano-"ther. The average hours of work, in these several portions "of the year, will amount to nine hours per diem, viz.

	Hours per diem.
"Michaelmas to Christmas -	- 7½
"Christmas to Lady-day - -	- 7½
"Lady-day to Midsummer -	- 9
"Midsummer to Michaelmas -	- 12
	36—which,

"divided by four, gives an average of nine hours."

A highly intelligent friend who resides in Kent, and has long farmed lands of his own there, has since confirmed this estimate to me on his own experience and observation. I believe it, therefore, to be accurate, and applicable (with small variations arising from difference of latitude and modes of agricultural operations) to every part of the kingdom; except that, from the present unfortunate circumstances of the

country, in respect of the poor laws, and want of full employment, the time of labour, in many places, is now materially reduced.

What, then, are the comparative results? They are, that the time of the slave-labour, to the time of the free-labour, is, on an average of the whole year, as sixteen, at least, to nine; that the minimum of the former, much exceeds the maximum of the latter; that in the crop-season of five months' duration, the West India slave has but one-half at most of the diurnal respite which the English labourer enjoys, even in the laborious harvest quarter, viz. six hours, (not to say five only,) instead of twelve.

The only consideration that can be alleged to alleviate, in any degree, this contrast, is that the English labourer, like the slave, has to walk to and from his place of daily work, though he has not his meals to prepare from a raw state, and dress, as a further abridgment of his daily respites; still less to renounce his dinner, that he may have time to raise his food. But if the reader thinks that some allowance should be made for his walks, to make the comparison, in all respects, unobjectionable in regard to times of rest, let it be remembered that, in taking sixteen hours as the annual average of the slave's occupations, for the purpose of this comparison, I have gratuitously struck off the fraction of forty minutes from the result of a calculation in which I had previously taken every doubtful or disputable portion of those occupations at the lowest probable estimate: let it be remembered also, that I have left Sabbath-work wholly out of the account. If, nevertheless, some abatement of the vast difference should be claimed in respect of the English labourer's walks, or any other ordinary addition to the time of actual work for his employer, the claim might be largely allowed, without any material benefit to the case of my opponents, or prejudice to my own. Enough of indisputable fact would remain to make the contrast enormously great.

I might safely even here restore to the possession of my opponents, most of the artful glosses, fallacies and impostures, which, by reviewing their own evidence, I have wrested from their hands. Supposing the noontide, as well as the morning respite, to be time of actual rest, the field-work to begin and end at six, instead of five and seven, and no necessary employment to

precede the driver's morning muster, or follow his evening dismissal; nay, supposing we were generally to adopt that gross standing sophism of my opponents, in their delusive use of the terms *labour* and *rest*, including in the former only the work enforced by the whip for the direct immediate profit of the master, and giving the name of *rest* or *leisure* to every other employment, however fatiguing, of men and women who have to provide for their own support; and were we moreover to reduce the labours of a five-months' harvest to the lowest amount that the most disingenuous colonist has alleged,—still the time of slave-labour between the tropics, woould be found very largely to exceed all that the best wages and competition for employment can obtain from the free peasantry of England. But when the reader contemplates the real duration of slave-work as demonstrated in a former chapter, recollecting, at the same time, that it is exacted from both sexes alike; and that, while the English peasant is recruited every week by an inviolable Sabbath rest, the poor field-negro has, for the most part, on that day, little more than a change of work; he will, I doubt not, feel both astonishment and indignation at those bold impositions on the British public, which have called for these comparative views.

The comparison, after all, or rather the shocking and opprobrious contrast, would be very imperfect, if we were to look no further than the respective times of labour. Two considerations of vast importance remain to be taken into the account, viz. the different climates in which the work is to be performed, and the distressing means by which that of the West Indies is enforced.

The latter is so momentous a subject, and involves so many kinds of pernicious and odious oppression, that it would be wrong to treat of it incidentally, merely as an aggravation of the general excess of toil. It well deserves to be the subject of a separate division in this work; especially as I have to redeem it, like the rest, from gross controversial falsehood. But let me here observe, by the way, that a given duration of work, which might be moderate if regulated by the will of each individual workman, as to its modes, its continuity, and its pauses, might become excessive and intolerable, when in-

discriminately enforced on a great number of men and women of different degrees of strength, by the coercion or present terror of the whip. Postponing this sad topic for the present, let us look for a moment at the extreme inequality between a given portion of field-labour performed in England, and the same portion of it in the torrid zone.

Here I must request my readers to look back on my preliminary remarks on this subject, and the authorities by which they were supported.* We have seen what are the instinctive universal propensities of the human race, in respect of labour or repose between the tropics, and the strong reasons we have for believing that these propensities were implanted in us by the gracious Author of our frames, for self-conservatory ends. He who does nothing in vain, nothing unwisely, has been fairly shewn by my zealous antagonist, Major Moody, to have provided a triple natural safeguard against voluntary excess of labour under a vertical sun, by the great bounty of nature in the production of food in that climate, by the aversion which all men naturally feel there to long continued labour in the sun, and by their love of repose and of the shade; whereas in England, field-labour, unless pushed beyond the strength of the workman, is at most seasons opposed by no such propensities, but by a vicious love of idleness in the ill-regulated mind, alone. Though labour, when a necessary task, is in some degree every where unpleasant, many independent and affluent men here, often take from choice as much bodily exercise, though of a different kind, as the day-labourers around them: but the master in a hot climate, though a native of it, is like his servant, prone to indolence or bodily inaction. It is the case with white creoles to a proverb; and is admitted, even by men of their own party in this controversy, to be their general characteristic.

What, then, are we to conclude as to the point in question? Are habits that violently controul our natural propensities, more easy than those which fall in with them? Is excessive labour less oppressive to the mind and body of the slave, because it is what his nature strongly revolts at, and

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* See Chapter II.

because it deprives him during the solar hours of that rest and refreshment in the shade, which are his main desire and delight? Or are there such benign virtues in the driving whip, that they sustain his strength, exhilarate his spirits, and convert repugnance and pain, into animal gratification? Either these absurdities are truths, or the same continuity of field-labour which our peasantry sustain, would be in a high degree irksome and severe to the slaves of a sugar estate. What, then, must be its duplication!! What less than it really is to a large part of them, exhaustion and weakness, sickness, and premature death?

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEANS BY WHICH LABOUR IS ENFORCED ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS GREATLY AGGRAVATE ITS SEVERITY, AND ARE IN THEIR NATURE AND EFFECTS EXTREMELY CRUEL AND PERNICIOUS.

SECTION I. — *Preliminary Remarks.*

ONE of the many difficulties which an advocate of the unfortunate slaves has to encounter, is that of determining what part of the premises he has to reason upon may be safely assumed; and what part of them it may be necessary or expedient to prove; or rather to prove anew; for on the one hand he may be thought needlessly to trespass on the patience of his readers; and on the other hand may be prejudiced by doubts that may have been produced in their minds through stale and often refuted, but boldly reiterated falsehoods.

If in any part of the case, I might now be relieved from this difficulty, it would seem to be the odious practice of *driving*; for though an account of it, which I published near twenty-eight years ago, was then boldly denied by the colonial party, and was arraigned of falsehood and calumny, even by some respectable colonial proprietors in their parliamentary places, it has been since so clearly confirmed by many of the planters themselves, and their partizans, that its veracity might be supposed to be placed quite beyond the reach of contradiction or doubt. The practice too has become, if we except some idle glosses on its actual nature, a subject not only of avowal, but of tenacious defence, by the colonial assemblies, and their controversial champions in this country. Nor is there one of the reformations proposed by his Majesty's government, in

pursuance of the resolutions of parliament, to which a more general and obstinate opposition has been given, than that of laying aside the driving whip.

Ought I then to detain my readers by now adducing evidence to shew that the slaves are really *driven*? I feel that the tolerably well informed part of them will regard it as a most superfluous work; but so very important is this part of the case, and so formidable are the powers of bold and artful misrepresentations, when the impostures of the press are seconded by a thousand self-interested tongues, that I dare not even in this instance leave any inlet to scepticism, when I can close it by irrefragable proofs.

I will, therefore, in the first place describe this brutal method of coercion in the very words of the description which I gave of it to the public, in a work long since out of print, early in the year 1802; it is offered, I beg my readers again to observe, not as matter of evidence; but as merely an exposition of the case, which I undertake to prove. I think it better and fairer in this instance, as I did in quoting Mr. Ramsay's pamphlet, to shew exactly what the statements that led to the long continued and yet subsisting controversy originally were, than to substitute any terms that are new.

It was with almost equal fulness published in an Appendix, No. 5, to my former volume; but as that book, which has been long, like the former, out of print, is not likely to be in the possession of all who may read the present, and as the statement is one which I shall here have to support by evidence, as well as to apply and reason upon, it is excusable, and perhaps necessary, to give the extract again.

Section II. — *Driving described.*

My account of the practice was as follows: — "Every man "who has heard any thing of West India affairs is acquainted "with the term *negro drivers*, and knows, or may know, that "the slaves in their ordinary field-labour are driven to their "work, and during their work, in the strict sense of the term "*driven* as used in Europe; though this statement no more

" implies that the lash is incessantly, or with any needless " frequency, applied to their backs, than the phrase to drive " a team of horses imports, that the waggoner is continually " smacking his whip." " It is enough for my purpose, that " in point of fact no feature of West India slavery is better " known, or less liable to controversy, or doubt, than this es- " tablished method in which field-labour is enforced." (So I certainly thought when penning those paragraphs for the public. I had not then sufficiently learnt of what temerity in assertion my opponents were capable when their bad cause required it.) " But a nearer and more particular view of this " leading characteristic may be necessary to those who have " never seen a gang of negroes at their work."

" When employed in the labour of the field, as for example " in holeing a cane-pieee, i. e. in turning up the ground into " parallel trenches for the reception of the cane-plants, the " slaves of both sexes, from twenty perhaps to fourscore in " number, are drawn out in a line, like troops on a parade, " each with a hoe in his or her hand; and close to them in the " rear is stationed a driver, or drivers, in number duly pro- " portioned to that of the gang. Each of the drivers, who are " always the most vigorous and active negroes on the estate, " has in his hand, or coiled round his neck, from which by ex- " tending the handle it can be disengaged in a moment, a " long thick and strongly plaited whip, called a cart-whip; " the report of which is as loud, and the lash as severe, as " those of the whips in common use with our waggoners; and " which he has authority to apply at the instant when his eye " perceives an occasion, without any previous warning. Thus " disposed, their work begins, and continues without inter- " ruption for a certain number of hours, during which at the " peril of the drivers an adequate portion of land must be " holed."

" As the trenches are generally rectilinear, and the whole " line of holers advances together, it is necessary that every " hole or section of the trench should be finished in equal " time with the rest; and if any one or more negroes were " allowed to throw the hoe with less rapidity or energy than " their companions in other parts of the line, it is obvious

"that the work of the latter must be suspended, or else such "part of the trench as is passed over by the former will be "more imperfectly formed than the rest. It is, therefore, "the business of the drivers not only to urge forward the "whole gang with sufficient speed, but sedulously to watch "that all in the line, whether male or female, old or young, "strong or feeble, work as nearly as possible in equal time, "and with equal effect. The tardy stroke must be quicken-"ed, and the languid invigorated, and the whole line made "to *dress*, in the military phrase, as it advances: No breath-"ing time, no resting on the hoe, no pause of langour, to "be repaid by brisker exertion on return to work, can be "allowed to individuals. All must work or pause to-"gether."

"I have taken this work, (it was added,) as the strongest "example: but other labours of the plantation are conducted "on the same principle, and as nearly as may be practicable, "in the same manner. When the nature of the work does "not admit of the slaves being drawn up in line abreast, "they are disposed, when the measure is feasible, in some "other regular order, for the facility of the driver's super-"intendance and coercion. In carrying the canes, for instance, "from the field to the mill, they are marched in files, each "with a bundle on his head, and with the driver in the rear: "His voice quickens their pace, and his whip when neces-"sary urges on those who attempt to deviate, or loiter on "their march." *

SECTION. III.—*Denials and misrepresentations of the practice stated and refuted.*

Cavils were made by different antagonists at some parts of this description, which I will not stop particularly to notice, because they have been either grounded on palpable misconstructions, and mutilations of the text, or related to circumstances obviously of no importance. But some colonial pro-

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* The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies. Hatchard, 1802, p. 9 to 12.

prietors of great respectability, declared in the House of Commons, soon after the appearance of the work, in general terms, that the account was false; or at least that they were so informed and so believed; though the more ordinary course then, as now, was to pretend that the driver did not, and "dared not use his whip; that it was a mere symbol of his "office, like the staff or laced hat of a parish beadle, and "that he was a mere superintendant of the work.

Mr. Dallas, in his history of the Maroon war, a work that soon after appeared, asserted on his own experience in Jamaica, that the driver's whip was a mere emblem of office. He affected to advise the planters to lay it aside, in order to avoid insidious misrepresentations of the business of the driver, "*unluckily so called*," and to propose that in its stead he "should have a laced hat, and a long staff like a drum-major's."* Others again, like the Barbadoes Assembly at this period, thinking such impostures too gross, asserted only that restrictions were imposed on the driver's power or practice of whipping. "The overseer (meaning as the con-"text shews, the driver), is never permitted to inflict any "punishment, except an occasional lash during the time of "work; and that is generally given over the clothes."†

The same pretexts, inconsistent and absurd though they are, and often refuted by myself and others on the most decisive evidence, are still in current use among the apologists of slavery; and have again been brought forward, with more than ordinary boldness, by that highly favoured and munificently rewarded champion of the planters, Mr. M'Queen.

I have cited from that writer already,‡ his idle attempts to disprove the driving practice, on the ground of the driver's precession to the place of labour at the dawn. But he does not stop there; he has the inconceivable confidence to add, "*wherever they go, or whatever they are about, he goes before*

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* Hist. of the Maroons. vol. ii. p. 419—20.

† Evidence of Mr. Kerby, a planter of Antigua; Report of 1790, p. 309. (See Admiral Edwards's testimony that they in general "*worked naked.*" Same Report, p. 412.) He meant no doubt to the waist, which is still a very ordinary case.

‡ Supra, p. 120.

" *them, and stands before them, and not behind them; nor dare* " *he use a whip to any one unless he is commanded.*"*

Lest it should be supposed that I take advantage of the rashness of this dashing pensioner of the planters, to prejudice his employers unfairly,† and that he has here exceeded his instructions, let me also quote a concurrent authority no less respectable than that of the council and assembly of St. Vincent, in a solemn address to their Governor, Sir Charles Brisbane, dated the 4th September, 1823, which was officially transmitted in answer to Earl Bathurst's circular letter, recommending to them reformations of their slave code, and is still referred to by some of my opponents as a paper of great authority.

" It is true," they say, " that on most plantations the

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* West India Colonies, &c. p. 256.

† Having mentioned this writer more than once as a mercenary antagonist, employed by the assemblies and planters, and largely paid by them for his pre-eminent zeal in their service, it may be right to apprise my readers, that the fact of his liberal retainers, is far from being matter of secrecy or reserve in the sugar colonies. His rewards have been repeatedly announced in strains of eulogy by various newspapers there; and I have now before me, *the Jamaica Courant of April* 28, 1828, in which the fact of his having received in one instance 3000*l.* sterling is noticed in a different stile. " *You Master M'Queen have received* 3000*l. sterling money,*" and again, " *You Master M'Queen are the hired advocate of slavery.*"

That this should be cast in his teeth in the West Indies, where no printer dares commonly insert a single line in opposition to the common cause, may seem somewhat strange. The explanation is, that Mr. M'Queen is thus contemptuously treated for having censured the alleged communication to a Jamaica printer of the Duke of Manchester's private letter to Lord Bathurst, and for his opposition to Mr. Beaumont and his pamphlet entitled, " *Compensation to Slave Owners*;" a work which, it is added, " has " obtained the sanction of all liberal men in Jamaica," and " their most " flattering testimonials of their approval, *not by a sum of money, Master* " *M'Queen, for endeavouring to persuade the people of Great Britain, that* " *slavery is a choice blessing of humanity; an attempt as hopeless as it is dis-* " *graceful, and which every reasoning man must laugh at.*"

The dupes of this writer's incessant misrepresentations and railings against me, and all the opponents of slavery, will here see what is thought of their understandings where the real case is known; and may, perhaps, lose some of their confidence in the Glasgow Courier, Blackwood's Magazine, the Morning Journal, and other ordinary vehicles of his mercenary labours.

" driver, as he is called (*for the West Indians have been ex-*
" *tremely unfortunate in terms,*) or the negro overseer, who is
" always promoted to this situation for his *superior intelligence*
" *honesty, and humanity,* whose employment is to collect the
" labourers in the field, and to superintend them at their
" work, carries this cart-whip in his hand *as a symbol of his*
" *authority.* It is his business to repair to the place of labour early
" in the morning, and by the crack of his whip, to give notice
" to the negroes that it is time for them to assemble, as well as
" of the place where their presence is required. The same use is
" made of the whip at noon and at night, as a signal that they
" may give up work and retire to their homes. But the reading
" of the 18th section of the slave act, already quoted, must
" be convincing proof that this driver is neither required, nor
" permitted to punish the negroes under his charge at his
" will and pleasure: for the legislature which restrained its
" use in the overseer of the estate, to whom such an extensive
" and valuable property is often solely entrusted, and forbids
" his inflicting more than ten stripes, unless the proprietor or
" his representative be present, could never have contemplat-
" ed that the negro driver was to whip at his own discretion.
" The truth is, that *no such practice being allowed, the legislature*
" *did not provide against that which* NEVER DID, AND NEVER
" COULD HAPPEN. A good disposed negro has nothing to
" fear from the driver; and one of a different character *has only*
" *to dread a representation of his negligence or improper behaviour*
" *to the manager at noon, or in the evening, when he makes his*
" *report of the business of the day,*" &c.*

Here we have Mr. M'Queen not only confirmed, but, I must confess, much surpassed, in those merits which have earned for him such high colonial plaudits, and munificent rewards. The passage well deserves particular and close attention, as an instructive specimen of the candour and veracity to be looked for in West Indian documents on these subjects, even when they emanate from the highest local authorities.

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* Communication from Sir Charles Brisbane, governor of St. Vincent &c. and joint reply of the Council and Assembly; printed by C. M. Willick, London, and largely distributed by the West India party here, p. 43, 44.

The argumentative part of the imposition is curious enough. Because these colonial legislators had so far complied with the long-continued solicitations of the mother country, as not to leave the most cruel excesses in the use of the *vindictive* whip, without any legal restraint, we are gravely desired to infer that they could not mean to permit the use of the *coercive* or *driving* whip at all; though it is, in their own estimate, as we shall presently see, the main spring of their agricultural system. It would be just as fair and as rational to infer, that because parliament, a few years ago, at the instance of Mr. Martin, made a law to restrain wanton cruelty towards horses and other working cattle, it could not mean to permit coachmen or carmen to use whips in their ordinary business; and, consequently, that any such practice as the driving coach or cart-horses with whips, must have been unknown at the time in this country.

What were the prohibitions to which these gentlemen refer? To quote them from their own context, they are, "That, in order to restrain arbitrary punishment, no slave on "any plantation or estate shall receive more than ten stripes "at one time, and for one offence, unless the owner, attorney, "guardian, executor, administrator, or manager of such plan-"tation or estate, having such slave under his care, shall be "present; and no such owner, &c. shall on any account "punish a slave with more than thirty-nine stripes, at one "time, or for one offence, &c. under a penalty not less than "15*l.*, or more than 30*l.* for every such offence, to be re-"covered," &c.*

The same idle restrictions had been long before enacted in other colonies; but none of their authors have been ingenious enough to make this use of them; and some of their champions, while taking ample credit for such laws, recognize, nevertheless, the subsisting use of the driver's whip, and defend it as a necessary practice.

These lawgivers of St. Vincent, it will be observed, virtually admit that if the driver had the power of whipping, in any degree, by his own authority, it was a power that ought to

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* Ibid. p. 30.

have been abolished; and also that its abolition was not within the purview of their enactments. In the latter admission, there certainly was nothing gratuitous; for what are the sanctions in the clause they cite? *Pecuniary penalties only, to be recovered by legal proceedings.* The offences in contemplation, therefore, could only have been those committed by free persons; whereas the drivers are universally slaves, against whom no such proceedings could have place. Had it been meant to restrain *them*, corporal punishments only would, as usual, have been ordained for their transgressions.

But it is confessed that there was no such meaning; and these honourable legislators gravely desire the British public to believe, that it was merely because it *had never entered "into "their contemplation" to suppose that the drivers could ever use their whips at all,* except by the manager's order on their return to the homestall. *"They did not provide against that which never "did, and never could happen!!!"*

We must conclude, then, if we admit their excuse or explanation, or, indeed, if we would acquit them of direct and flagrant falsehood, that they had never, during a controversy of above thirty years continuance, in which they themselves had been earnestly engaged, heard a word of that which has so long been a prominent charge against their system among anti-slavery writers!! This is the more surprising, because they do me the honour to notice, in the same paper, my labours in this cause, though in no complimentary strains; and I am certainly guiltless of having omitted, in any of my writings, to bring forward the driving practice with the strong reprehension that it deserves.

If the charges of their opponents had been unknown, we must, to support their veracity, further suppose them ignorant, that gentlemen of their own party, aye, and *planters of their own small island,* had strangely alleged and censured the general practice of this thing, *" which never did and never "could happen!"* They had not, we must presume, ever read or heard of, that far-famed work, the " Practical Rules" of their late fellow-colonist, and fellow-planter, *Dr. Collins!* I beseech the reader, if only for curiosity's sake, to collate with this assertion of the St. Vincent's Council and Assembly,

some of the passages I have already cited from that work ;* and among them the following extract.

" The consequence of which (i. e. of the gang being badly " assorted in respect of strength) is that either the weaker " negroes must retard the stronger ones, or *your drivers, in-* " *sensible of the cause of their backwardness, or not weighing* " *it properly, will incessantly urge them, either with stripes or* " *threats, to keep up with the others,* by which means they are " overwrought, and compelled to resort to the sick-house."

" *Incessantly urging them with stripes!*" visionary and preposterous idea ! cruel and audacious calumny on a system which the author was himself engaged in, and which he insidiously affected to extenuate ! Why Dr. Collins, you well knew that the drivers never did, or ever could give them a a stripe when at their work at all. It is solemnly asserted by the honourable legislators of St. Vincent, the very island in which you lived thirty years, that the infliction of a single stroke by the driver's authority, is a thing that " *never did, and* " *never could happen.*" Such a practice never was heard of by any planter of that island ; — never entered into the contemplation of its lawgivers, as a possible case, against which they had to provide !

But Dr. Collins's strange libels on the system he had been so long engaged in, went still further. " Sorry am I to say " (he tells us in another place) that by much too frequent " use hath been made of this instrument," (the cart-whip) " and that it is often employed to a degree which, by inducing " a callosity of the parts, destroys their sensibility, and ren- " ders its further application of little avail. *It is not unusual* " *to arm the negro drivers with it, and to leave the use of it to* " *their discretion : of course it is administered, neither with im-* " *partiality, nor judgment ; for it is generally bestowed with* " *rigour on the weakest negroes of the gang, and on those who* " *are so unfortunate as not to be in favour with this sub-despot :* " *and that too frequently on any part of the naked body,*† *or the* " *head,* whilst the more able negroes, who sometimes deserve " it, escape with impunity. Now as this cannot easily be

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* Supra, p. 39 & 98.

† See supra, p. 196.

"prevented while the whip remains in such hands, I would "propose to banish it entirely from the field, and to allow "the driver to carry thither only a small stick or switch; and "that rather as an ensign of authority than as an instrument "of correction, *as I am informed hath been practised on some "estates in Barbadoes.*"*

I beg the reader to observe that this long experienced planter of St. Vincent, was obliged to resort to another colony for even a hearsay example of any exception to a practice which the legislators of St. Vincent have the superlative confidence to represent as one that could not enter into their contemplation, *because it never existed!*

That he was misinformed, even as to the supposed exception, will not be doubted, when I have added the further evidence on this subject, which we are furnished with on no less authority than that of the Council of Barbadoes itself, in the report before cited, dated the 22nd July, 1823, and published by their agent in this country.

That honourable body, and the witnesses examined by them, were certainly desirous enough of denying every practice repugnant to the feelings of the British people, that could, with any colour of probability, be denied. Among other points, the practice of driving, was one they much laboured to extenuate; and at no small expence of truth; but not having the nerves of their St. Vincent neighbours, they did not venture to deny the driver's power of whipping; still less to speak of it as a thing unknown, and beyond the range of their imagination. They thought it enough to assert that the power extended only to a certain number of lashes at a time.

For this purpose, *Foster Clarke*, Esq. one of their witnesses, deposed as follows: — "The overseers of the field-work, or as "they are often called drivers, are permitted at no time *to give "a negro more than six stripes with a cat. If the obstinacy and "unruly conduct of any negro requires a greater punishment, he "is reported to the manager.*"†

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* Practical Rules, 201-2.

† Report of the Barbadoes Council, &c. of July 22, 1823. Printed in London, 1824, p. 110.

William Sharp, Esq., another witness, is thus reported to the same effect. "Saith, that *the driver is restrained in his "authority. He is not allowed to inflict more than six stripes; if "greater punishment is necessary, the offender is reported to the "manager.*"*

Strange extenuation this, supposing it to be true! Only six stripes at a time in the use of the driving whip on human beings!!! Why if a carman or ploughman were to give as many to his horses for every halt, or bad movement, every spectator would exclaim against his barbarity, and be ready, perhaps, to take him before a magistrate for an offence against Mr. Martin's Act.

But that to which I would beseech the particular attention of my readers, is the astonishing contrast between these defensive representations of the general practice in Barbadoes, and the cotemporary statements from the council and assembly of the neighbouring island of St. Vincent; and from that champion of all the colonies, who stoutly affirms "*that the "driver dares not use a whip to any one, unless he is commanded.*" The legislature or people of Barbadoes, among others, lauded and paid him for that bold perversion of truth, while the cotemporary report of their own council thus clearly proved it to be such!

To be sure the West Indians, if not "extremely unfortunate," as the St. Vincent paper tells us, "in *their terms*," must have been so in their friends, and in the apologists of their own body; for we have also seen what Mr. De la Beche has more recently published on this subject; availing himself, no doubt maliciously, like their enemies, of this unlucky misnomer, to persuade the British public that the drivers really do drive.

"Then it is," says he (viz. in the morning muster), "that "the negroes suffer most *from the driver's whip, for he unfor-"tunately can, upon his own authority, inflict punishment on "those who are not in time, thus making him the judge of an "excuse that might appear quite valid to the manager.*"† Strange

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* Ibid. p. 116.

† See the quotation more at large, supra, 98.

and suicidal calumniator of a system he is himself engaged in! What more could he have said if he had been called as a witness by the anti-slavery party expressly to discredit and disgrace the distinguished M'Queen, and the honourable St. Vincent legislators?

Let me quote, however, another passage from the same recent authority. "*With few exceptions, the drivers on Ja-*
"*maica* estates carry either whips or cats: on some they are
"little used, *but I am afraid they are not always mere symbols*
"*of authority*, &c. On estates where the whip is permitted
"as a stimulus to labour, the driver stands near the negroes
"when at work, and *has the power of inflicting punishment at*
"*his own discretion upon those who may appear to him to be*
"*idle;* a power, as may easily be imagined, liable to much
"abuse, and one which should be abolished; it being no
"more than common justice that enquiry should be instituted
"previous to punishment, setting aside the revolting idea of
"impelling human beings to their labour by the whip."*

Another experienced planter, Mr. Stewart of Jamaica, in a work that issued from the press in the same year (1823) with the St. Vincent's legislative address, thus writes: "However
"averse a proprietor may be to the too free use of the whip,
"abuses will prevail while it is suffered to be used at all.
"Even an overseer cannot, if he was so disposed, effectually
"controul the unjust and arbitrary exercise of it by the
"drivers, *who are too generally hard hearted and partial in*
"*their distributions* of the minor punishments they are autho-
"rised to inflict. A driver may maltreat and persecute *in a*
"*petty way the unfriended slave against whom he has a grudge,*
"while he connives at the faults of those whom he wishes to
"favour."† The same writer, speaking of the sensations of a newly arrived plantation assistant, called a bookkeeper, from Europe, says: "He finds himself placed in a line of life, where
"to his first conception every thing wears the appearance of
"barbarity and slavish oppression. He sees the slaves as-

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* Notes, &c. by Mr. De la Beche, p. 20. 21.

† "View of the past and present state of the Island of Jamaica, by Mr. Stewart." Edinburgh, 1823. App. 346.

" sembled in gangs in the fields, and kept *to their work by the* " *terror of the whips borne by black drivers, certainly not the* " *most gentle of human kind,*" &c.*

Had Mr. Stewart meant to expose in all points the falsehood of the cotemporary statements of the St. Vincent's Council and Assembly, how could he have done it more effectually? The much-extolled drivers "*chosen for distinguished humanity*" are not only, we find, authorized to whip at their discretion, but too generally abuse their power. They are *hard-hearted*, as well as partial and unjust. And who can doubt that such must be the ordinary effect of an office, the daily and hourly business of which is the inflicting pain on their fellow-creatures? The discerning reader could hardly have overlooked the anxiety of the honourable St. Vincent's legislators, to varnish the characters of their drivers, in connection with statements, which if true, made their humanity of no account.

Should I be supposed to pay more attention than is due to this report, considering the numerous impostures of the same kind that I have the painful duty to expose, let me remark, that it was a public document highly extolled in the colonial circles here; though I can truly say that the passage cited does not exceed in misrepresentation its account of the system in many other parts not within the scope of this work. It was not

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* Ibid. p. 192.

In quoting this writer as an opponent, I should be unjust not to add, that he is a far more candid one than almost any other whose works I have cited, with the exception of Mr. De la Beche and Dr. Collins; and that though his habits as a planter, and his connections with West Indians, have led him into great partiality (unconsciously perhaps) in many parts of his work, his intentions, as I believe, were good. That I am nevertheless entitled to use his authority as a partizan of the colonies in this controversy is manifest from the general spirit of his work; and the following extracts may suffice to prove it. " Such improvements in the slave-laws, as can with perfect safety " be made at the present moment, should be carried into effect, not by the " Imperial Parliament, as has been strongly recommended, but by the co- " lonial legislators to whom belongs the right of regulating all matters con- " nected with their internal policy," &c. " Those who would persuade the " British Parliament to legislate for the colonies may be very well meaning " people, but unquestionably they are not aware of the consequences of " what they recommend."—p. 247.

only boasted of as a most powerful and satisfactory defence of the common cause; but some respectable West India merchants and proprietors (themselves no doubt deceived, as too many of them unfortunately are, in respect of the real case) sent copies of it to anti-slavery friends, whom they good-naturedly hoped to convert by it. I myself had the honour of such a present, from gentlemen of whose good intentions I am almost as sure, as I am of the utter insincerity and falsehood of the composition they so much valued. Let me then in return direct their attention further, both to the extreme artfulness, and manifest falsehood of its contents.

"There is no party or individual," the report adds, "in "the colony, who is not willing to take from the hands of the "driver, that *which he is only allowed to carry as a mark of his* "*authority*. But the time and the mode must be left to those "only who know how difficult; nay, how dangerous, it is to "make the most immaterial alteration in a system built upon "the unsolid foundation of influence and opinion. *The time* "*is still far distant when it would be either prudent or safe to* "*hint to this class of persons, that they are no longer amenable* "*to corporal punishment, restrained and guarded even as the* "*application of it now is.*"*

Surely these gentlemen must estimate very meanly the understandings of the people of England, when they hope to delude them by flimsy and contradictory pretences like these! "*A mark of his authority!*" Why, if they tell truth, the driver has no authority to mark. He is a mere inspector and reporter. If the sight of the whip were necessary to remind the poor slaves of their liability to corporal punishment, it would suffice as well for that purpose to plant it before them in the field, as to put it in the driver's hand. Nay, much better; for as the driver's station is in the rear, it must be in general unseen by them during their work.

The same idle pretence has elsewhere taken a different, and perhaps still more inconsistent turn, though on what may possibly be supposed better authority. *Mr. Dwarris* in his pamphlet, called "*The West India Question,*" says, "the cart-

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* P. 46, 7.

" whip, either as an instrument of punishment, or as a sym-
" bol of authority, has grown out of use. The cat-o'nine-tails
" which is used in the British army, is substituted for it."*

Where and when was this substitution, and this disuse? and upon what evidence does this public functionary hazard such assertions? Certainly he cannot speak from his own experience or observation; for he closed his circuit through the different islands as a commissioner in January, 1824,† and has not, as I understand, since visited the West Indies; and it appears undeniably from the authorities I have quoted, among others from the reluctant, but candid admissions of Mr. De la Beche, a brother planter of the same island, Jamaica, who was there till the end of 1824, and published here in 1825, that the use of the cart-whip, not as a *symbol* merely, but as " a *stimulus to labour*," then continued to be " general " among the planters of that colony. *With very few excep-*
" *tions*, the drivers on Jamaica estates, carry either whips or " cats; on some they are little used," &c.‡

Is still more recent evidence desired? A Jamaica newspaper, the *Watchman*, of December 5th, 1829, nearly the latest date of any accounts from that island, is this moment laid on my table, while I am correcting the proof of the present sheet for press; and I extract from it the following paragraph.—" That the whip is still in use on some estates in " Jamaica, we fear is but too true; but on the other hand, " we are glad to say that *some estates* have abolished the " system of corporal punishment altogether; and these plant-
" ations, we are informed, yield as fair returns to the pro-
" prietors as when conducted on the old execrable system. " Some of the estates to which we refer are those of Mr. *Wild-*
" *man* and Mr. *De la Beche*." No others are specified; and those who know the pre-eminent characters in point of humanity of both these proprietors, will be at no loss to conjecture the cause. They had both within a few years visited Jamaica, for the sake of witnessing and improving the condition of their slaves.

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* P. 16. † Third Report, 94.

‡ Notes, &c. p. 20. And see the quotation, supra, p. 203, 4.

As to the substitution of the cat for the whip, Mr. Dwarris doubtless had never read the debates in the Jamaica Assembly, in December, 1826, though they were republished in several of our own newspapers,* or he would have known, that this very substitution, which he represents as actually made, in terms of universal import, was then proposed and powerfully advocated to no purpose; being rejected by a majority of 28 to 12, in that most respectable of West India assemblies.

Mr. Dwarris, like most of his fellow-labourers, takes care in mentioning the cat-o'nine-tails, to tell us "that it is used "in the British army." If he could add, that it is used on the backs of innocent soldiers, and of their wives and daughters too, at the discretion of the drummers, and to quicken the privates in working for the profit of the officers, by whom alone its use could be controuled, the two cases would have some similarity; but, otherwise, the precedent of our flogging convicted thieves in our gaol-yards, or at the cart's-tail, would have been equally to his purpose.

The allusion, however, when coming from the pen of this planter-commissioner, is not without its use. The idle and hackneyed palliation manifests in what spirit he reports, and writes. The stress laid on the alleged substitution, will also enable those who reason as well as read, to estimate the sincerity of the pretence, that the carrying the whip in the field is merely symbolical, and meant only to operate on the imagination of the slaves. If so, where would be the boasted improvement? As a *symbol*, the cart-whip would be not less harmless, and from long-formed associations of ideas, far more efficacious, than the cat. Aye, and in its true use more merciful; for the report of the whip in the rear often suffices without its smart; whereas the cat can admonish only by its actual inflictions.

My readers will probably think am mis-spending their time by these comments, after citing so much direct and decisive evidence as to the actual and still existing practice; especially as I have shewn them, that the pretences I am combating

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* They are given from the Jamaica newspapers in the Anti-Slavery Reporter, No. 21.

were advanced with equal confidence forty years ago. But strong facts require strong proofs; and it is, I feel, a fact requiring no ordinary force of evidence, that the practice is of the utmost notoriety throughout the British West Indies, while thus publicly denied in England, by the respectable authorities I have cited; especially that of the St. Vincent's Council and Assembly. I will not, therefore, abstain from adducing some further cotemporary evidence, given by the most zealous partizans and accredited advocates of the sugar-colonies at large.

And first, that of *Alexander M'Donnell, Esq.* secretary to the committee of the inhabitants of Demarara, an author, from his talents, as well as from the official character in which he writes, of no small account. In his work, entitled "*Considerations on Negro Slavery,*" &c.† this gentleman notices, among other topics, the driving method of coercion; and does *he* countenance his fellow-labourer of the same colony, Mr. M'Queen, or the St. Vincent legislators, or Mr. Dwarris, by denying its existence? So much the contrary, that he employs his most strenuous efforts to reconcile the acknowledged fact of its continuance, with that pretence, to support which is the main drift of his work, namely, that slavery is in a state of great and progressive improvement.

The whole of his ninth chapter is systematically and elaborately devoted to that end. He distinguishes for the purpose four stages in the supposed progress of amelioration, or rather four distinct states of slavery; for as to the first, he admits it to be the extremity of unmitigated oppression, that which exists in colonies still supplied by the slave trade. The second, he says, "presents a very great amelioration, as the "supply by traffic is stopped, and the slaves have to be reared, "instead of being purchased;" from which he plausibly, however untruly, infers a great improvement in their treatment. *This*, which upon his own premises is the first advance in their condition, he maintains to have already taken place. The *third* state, is *the substitution of task work for the driving whip;* and to this he confesses, that

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* See supra, p. 25.

they have not yet arrived; and attempts to apologize for it, on the very ingenious pretext, that reformation is rendered unsafe by the only means which can possibly produce it; the interposition of the mother country.

But let me give his own words. "Seventeen years have "not elapsed since the abolition of the slave trade; and so "great has been the improvement, that I regard the negroes "in the West Indies at *nearly* at the end of what I have termed "the *second* state of slavery. They can participate in the "full enjoyment of physical comforts."—(Would to God that this were true! The shocking mortality in that very colony of all the inhabitants of which this gentleman is the official organ too clearly attests the contrary.) "*They, however,*" he adds, "*are not yet so far advanced as to perform their labour* "*without the presence of a coercing power:* this desirable object "has been unavoidably delayed, from an unfortunate notion "which has taken possession of their minds, that it is con- "trary to the wish of those in authority in this country, that "they should work at all. Could this fatal delusion be re- "moved, together with the injurious effects resulting from "intemperate discussion, I confidently predict, that in a very "short time they would attain the *third* state," i. e. an exemption from driving; or to use the author's own words, "*when* "*the whip that most repulsive characteristic of slavery no longer* "*is used as a stimulus to labour.**

I will not digress so far as would be necessary to illustrate the modesty of this excuse for the continuance of driving by this organ of the committee of all the inhabitants of Demarara. I will only ask, if the negroes there, are under the influence of the delusion stated, (which I believe to be just as true as the boldest of the extravagant fictions I am refuting,) who inspired them with it? who, but those who told them every day in their resolutions, published in every newspaper of the colony, and fatally in one instance led them to believe, that the mitigations of their state recommended by the British Government actually meant emancipation?

If, indeed, the views of this writer are correct, the slaves

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* See the whole of Chapter IX., and particularly p. 204 to 207

might have held the notion he ascribes to them, without mistake; for he reasons elaborately to prove, that the Trinidad order, which forbids the use of the whip for "coercing labour," virtually amounts to emancipation. He deduces from what he calls a strict analysis of the order, the conclusion, that "*the whip is not to be used at any time for the purpose of coercing* "*the negroes to work*; and if such," he adds, "were its in- "tention, the *result must be considered as emancipation at* "*once.*" It is true, he afterwards admits, that this construction is not consistent with the spirit of the order; and that "it was intended merely to express, that the whip was "not to be used on the spot as an instrument of compelling "the negroes by its exhibition to perform the labour." But is he content with the regulation even in that qualified sense? By no means; not even as it respects the *women!* Adopting this interpretation, he maintains still the impracticability of reconciling a disuse of the driving-whip, with the "con- "tinuance of the present system, as society is constituted in "the West Indies," and this I freely admit to him; for the present system, as I have shewn, is to exact from the unfortunate slaves of both sexes, a most cruel and destructive excess of labour, such as the self-preservatory resistance of oppressed nature will not permit them to yield, except to the irresistible force of brutal coercion.

"This compulsion," he adds, "is the characteristic dis- "tinction, the unavoidable attendant, and beyond all com- "parison the most repulsive feature of slavery. *Deeply, in-* "*deed, should I rejoice if my experience would warrant me in ad-* "*mitting, that it could as yet be dispensed with.*"

When Mr. M'Donnell represents this driving method, as "*the characteristic distinction, and the unavoidable attendant* "*of slavery,*" he must be ignorant, or suppose his readers to be so, of what slavery was, and is, in antient and modern Europe, in Africa, and in the East, where driving was never known,* and must have strangely forgot what the practice is in many cases, even in those sugar colonies of which he was

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* See my former volume, p. 46., and in various other places.

the official organ; for if negroes will not work without a driver behind them, how are their separate labours performed, when they are dispersed for the picking of grass, or when they are employed at the mill and copper-holes, and in the boiling-house?

They are driven only when they are employed in gang; for then only can the presence of one or two whips impel a numerous body. To assign a driver to every isolated individual, or to a few labourers in each detached operation at the works, would be to sacrifice labour itself to the means of its compulsion. This "*characteristic*," therefore, "*of slavery*" is lost, this "*unavoidable attendant*" of it, is avoided, even by the sugar-planter himself, whenever his own interest or convenience demand the laying it aside. There is no present impending whip to operate "*in terrorem*" in some of the most essential parts of the business of the plantation; and yet that business is done; and yet the planters would persuade us, that without a present whip nothing can be done in the field.

That *so much* would not be done without it I am far indeed from meaning to deny. This is the true and only cause of its being so tenaciously retained.

Here let me pause, and request the reader's attention to the general character of this controversy as it is maintained on the part of the colonies. There is no part of their system, the reader now I trust sees, however flagrant and notorious, that they scruple to deny the existence of, whenever it suits their convenience. Has it been decisively proved against them, has it been publicly confessed by their own partizans and witnesses, and by their legislative bodies, even in cotemporary reports? their intrepid contempt of truth is not at all impaired: their next controversial piece boldly re-asserts the same convicted and repudiated falsehoods; and not only so, but arraigns the veracity and integrity of those who have presumed to quote against them their own admissions.

They add, as I have before observed, the fraudulent artifice of leaving unnoticed the quotations themselves. In my remarks on this driving method in my former volume, and in earlier publications, I cited some of the very authorities here presented to my readers, especially that of Dr. Collins; and

to the credit of none of them has any of my opponents ventured ever to object. Yet that broad denial of the driver's authority, and of the whole practice of driving which I have cited from Mr. M'Queen, is ushered in by him with the following exclamation, "*When will the anti-colonial party tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! Never "while they can substitute falsehood or misrepresentation for it.* And proceeding to quote a statement that "the slaves whe-"ther male or female are driven to hard labour by the im-"pulse of the cart-whip;" he subjoins, "*this is either wholly "false or the facts are misrepresented. The slaves are not driven "to their work,*" *&c.* as in my former quotation.

In what other case were men ever heard with patience, not to say with favour, after the facts they solemnly denied have been proved under their own hands, or from their own lips? But the case of the poor slaves of the West Indies is unparalleled in all its circumstances. Their own mouths are gagged by tremendous laws, and more tremendous manners. Their voluntary advocates, and their witnesses, are persecuted and hunted down with calumny and clamour; and their oppressors are listened to with a strange credulity, in spite of every demonstration that any human evidence, their own confessions included, can afford of the truths they inconsistently deny. The gross impostures that are exposed and confessed to-day are brought forward with as much confidence to-morrow, as if they had never been detected; and unhappily obtain credit anew on the same exploded authorities.

To undeceive men who are resolved to be deceived, is a vain attempt. There is a large part of the upper and middle circles of this community, a formidably large one, to whose eyes the light of truth on these subjects is too painful ever to be admitted. But let me remind the rest of my countrymen, that if they wilfully resist conviction, when it is pressed upon them by evidence beyond dispute, complaisance for a West Indian friend or connection, will form no excuse with *Him* who is the Searcher of hearts, and the equal Judge of the whole earth. They will not be less guilty of that cruel oppression which they would not lend their aid to terminate, because they refused impartially to exercise the understandings

he has given them in distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

Those, let me add, who defend their conduct on premises that they know to be false, virtually admit that it is not to be fairly defended; and, therefore, as I have demonstrated, not only in respect of the driving method, but many of the essential points both in the law and practice of slavery, the utter falsehood of those defensive pretexts in which the colonists could not be mistaken, I am entitled to maintain that they are conscious of, and virtually confess the oppressive and indefensible nature of the system in which they are engaged. Those who can conscientiously side with them must differ in moral judgment, not only with the accusers, but the accused.

SECTION IV.—*The cruel and pernicious nature and effects of the practice stated and proved.*

HAVING rescued this part of the case from bold misrepresentation, and proved that the immoderate labour of the field-negroes is still extorted by the driving-whip; and not merely by its terror, but by its actual inflictions, I proceed to point out some of the pernicious effects. These have in part been already incidentally noticed and proved; but the miseries resulting from a mode of private despotism not more repulsive to the feelings of Englishmen, than remote from their experience, demand a distinct and full investigation.

Driving is the most peculiar characteristic of West Indian slavery and, as I have always held, the most opprobrious part of the system. I will here in the first place, transcribe my own earliest public strictures on the subject, rather than give them in a new form of expression. It will serve at least to shew the consistency of my present views with those which I submitted to the public nearly eight-and-twenty years ago. Besides, in this instance, I might fairly contend, were it necessary, that some credit is due to those long since promulgated *opinions*, though I decline to claim it for the *testimony*, of an avowed and zealous adversary of the system. When any hypothesis, propounded and supported by reasoning *à priori*, is found to agree with the predicted result of ex-

periments, not previously made, we feel that its truth is rendered highly probable; and on the same principles my views of the terrible effects of the driving-whip might now claim credit, for it was upon them that I foretold to the public with the utmost confidence in March 1802, the indomitable resistance of the negroes of St. Domingo to the extremest efforts of Buonaparte, at a time when his inexorable purpose to restore slavery in that island was sustained by the then gigantic power of France, unopposed by any foreign enemy, and devoted to that single object.

"Among the various powerful feelings, (I then said) which "will combine a large community of negroes inured by a ten "years' experience to the habits of freedom, with an aversion. "perfectly irreconcileable to their former state, there is one "which claims particular attention. It is one which will pro- "bably occasion much obstinacy in the attempt to refix their "fetters; while it creates an equal pertinacity of resistance "I mean that antipathy to their former labours which has "been already so visible in the negroes of St. Domingo. "Man is naturally indolent, and impatient of bodily restraint. "Though spurred by his hopes and fears into activity, and "often to the most ardent exertions, he is with difficulty bent "to the yoke of uniform and persevering labour. The sug- "gestions of foresight, however, are very powerful impulses, "especially when seconded by habit; and the great Author of "our nature has conferred on them a mild as well as a right- "ful dominion. When we bow to the golden sceptre of rea- "son, obedience has many facilities, and its pains many mi- "tigations. Nature is not thwarted more rudely than the "rational purpose demands; and the mind, while it urges on "the material frame, cheers it in return with refreshing and "invigorating cordials.

"Look at the most laborious peasant in Europe, and if you "please the most oppressed: he is toiling, it is true, from pain- "ful necessity; but it is a necessity of a moral kind, acting "upon his rational nature; and from which brutal coercion "differs as widely as a nauseous drench in the mouth of an "infant from the medicated milk of its mother.

"Is the impelling motive fear of want, or dread of a master's

" displeasure? yet he sees on the other hand the approbation " and reward attainable by exertions whereof the degree is at " least for the moment spontaneous. Self-complacency al- " leviates his toil; and hope presents to his view the hearty " well-earned meal, the evening fire-side, and perhaps the " gratifications of the husband or the father, in promoting the " well-being of those dearest to his heart. Is his work fa- " tiguing? he is at liberty at least to introduce some little va- " rieties in the modes, or breaks in the continuity of it, which " give him sensible relief. He can rest on his spade, or stay " the plow a moment in the furrow; can gaze at a passing " object; or stop a brother-villager to spend a brief interval in " talk.

" To the reflecting mind these little privileges will not ap- " pear unimportant, when compared with the hard and cheer- " less lot of the field-negro. He is not at liberty to relax his " tired muscles, or beguile his weariness, either by voluntary " pauses in labour, or by varying its mode: he must work on " with his fellow-slaves, let fatigue or satiety groan ever so " much for a moment's respite, till the driver allows a halt.

" But far more deplorable is the want of all those animat- " ing hopes, that sweeten the toil of the European peasant. " To the negro slave, driven to his work, his involuntary ex- " ertions, as they can plead no merit, can promise in general " no reward. His meal will not be more plentiful, nor his cot- " tage better furnished, by the fruits of his utmost toil. As " to his wife and children, they can hardly be called his own: " Whether the property of the same or a different owner, it is " upon the master, not himself, that their subsistence and " well-being depend.

" The negro, therefore, casts his hoe from no impulse but " that of fear; and fear brought so closely and continually " into contact with its object, that we can hardly allow it " to rise above brutal instinct, and call it natural foresight, " without ascribing to the docility of the horse an equal " elevation. The other great and pleasing spring of human " action, hope, is entirely cut off.

" When these peculiar circumstances are duly considered, " the rooted aversion of the free negro to his former labours " cannot excite surprise. It is unnecessary to suppose that

" they were excessive in degree, for in their kind, they were " too irksome to be by the most patient of our race con- " tentedly endured, or remembered without abhorrence. " Neither is it necessary to suppose that the impending lash " was, in the ordinary routine of field-duty, often actually " inflicted. The human team might, when well broken, move " on so regularly, as to make the whip in the hand of a " humane driver little more than a mere ensign of authority ; " yet the sense of perpetual constraint and ever-goading " necessity, would be much the same. The motive would " still be instant fear, though producing from habit a re- " gular and equable movement. It might be admitted, " even without danger to the argument (though I am sorry " to say not without doing violence to truth, as well as pro- " bability), that this coarse actuation of the physical powers " of the human frame by an external mind, interested in " their effect, was in general not pushed to excess, but was " an impulse as leniently and wisely regulated as that of " reason, when guided by the sympathies of the soul with " the same body to which nature has allied it. Nay, we " might overlook the inevitable frequency of such excesses " as masters of narrow or unfeeling minds may be expected " to practice ; and suppose that, in the time or measure of " work, avarice, armed with an unlimited power, never ex- " acted too much, nor ever made too little allowance for oc- " casional or particular weakness ; in other words, that while " thrones in Europe too rarely find possessors fit to govern, " the sceptre of a plantation falls into the hands of none but " *Antonines* and *Trajans ;* still we should see in this manner " of enforcing work, and in the general circumstances of " West Indian bondage, enough to account for a strong an- " tipathy in the breast of the enfranchised negro to his former " state, and its attendant labours." *

Reasoning upon these premises, I predicted an event of the French expedition against the Negroes of St. Domingo, which appeared at the time not only highly improbable to the European public, but hardly within the limits of pos-

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* Crisis of the Sugar Colonies. Hatchard, March, 1802, p. 38—52.

sibility. And yet how amply has the prediction been verified! All that a colossal power, beneath whose sway Europe lay prostrate, could do to frustrate it, was tried in vain. The military prowess of France, the consummate perfidy of Buonaparte, his relentless vengeance, his atrocious barbarities, unexampled in any former recorded crimes of man, were all found to be impotent, when opposed in the breasts of the devoted Haytians by their recollections of the driving-whip.

It will be perceived, on a comparison of the extract here given from the Crisis of the Sugar Colonies, with the passages cited from Mr. M'Donnell, that my inferences would be sufficiently supported even by that writer's admissions. I did not assume, as he imagines his opponents to do, that whipping was "incessantly inflicted." I did not reason even on the incontestible fact of its great frequency; but from that ever impending power and terror of the whip, which he defends, and represents as essential to the system; and I submit to the feelings, or rather to the cool judgment, of my readers, whether this, were it all, would not be enough to make such a mode of coercion not only degrading to human nature, but in a high degree cruel and pernicious. I did not even assume, for the purpose of my argument (though I asserted the fact, as I have ever done in all my writings on slavery), that the quantum of labour enforced either by the smart or terror of the whip was excessive; but I have now demonstrated that it really is so, and to the utmost possible degree of relentless, avaricious oppression.

This fatal effect of such brutal coercion I have always regarded, as by far the worst among the manifold mischiefs of which the driving-whip is productive. It compels these devoted victims of avarice to labour beyond their strength; it is the main source of the diseases to which they are subject; it hurries a large proportion of them prematurely to their graves; and by its effect on the women, prevents that native increase, which would otherwise repair all the waste of life that the other severities of the system occasion, among a race pre-eminently hardy and prolific. Witness the often-attested, well-proved, and, I believe, uncontested fact, that where driving is not practised, the native slave population is always found to increase.

But the same oppressive effect of this mode of coercion is the true cause of that pertinacity with which the sugar-planters maintain it. They admit, as we have seen, its offensive character; they profess an earnest desire to abolish it as a theme of reproach with those whom they call their enemies; and yet, they obstinately refuse its abolition; and why, but because they know, that the same quantity of forced labour cannot otherwise be obtained?

I have already admitted, that the slaves will not work to that extremity of exertion to which, not the presence of the whip merely, but its painful inflictions, coupled with its incessant terrors impel them; but I maintain, that this efficacy of the driving method, is the worst of its effects. It conduces to the present profits of the planters; but is unspeakably cruel and destructive to the slaves.

But let us look more distinctly at the iniquities and the miseries, directly and indirectly, produced by this practice, which are greater than can be easily described or conceived.

We have seen what colonial writers have admitted, as to the despotism, and the partiality with which the drivers are apt to exercise their powers. "They are," according to *Mr. Stewart*, "too generally hard-hearted, and partial in the "minor punishments they are authorized to inflict. They may "maltreat and persecute the unfriended slave against whom "they have a grudge."* "They have the use of the whip," says *Dr. Collins*, "at their discretion, and of course it is ad-"ministered neither with impartiality nor judgment; it is "generally bestowed with rigour on the weakest negroes of "the gang, and on those who are so unfortunate as not to be "in favor with this sub-despot."† "The driver," says *Mr. De la Beche*, "has the power of inflicting punishment at his "own discretion upon those who may appear to him to be "idle; a power as may be easily imagined liable to much "abuse."‡

These, be it always remembered, are not the statements of anti-slavery writers, but of planters and apologists of the system; and what appalling accounts do some of them give of

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* Supra, p. 204. † Supra, p. 201. ‡ Ibid. 204.

the effects! "The whip," says *Dr. Collins*, "is often em-
"ployed to a degree, which by inducing a callosity of the
"parts, destroys their sensibility, and renders its further ap-
"plication of little avail;"* and *Mr. Beckford* makes a similar remark, "When a negro becomes familiarized to the whip, he
"no longer holds it in terror."†

What, I beg the compassionate reader to reflect, must be the sufferings of the poor beings before it comes to this? How exquisite must have been the tortures endured by the reiterated incisions of the tremendous cart-whip, the protracted miseries of the wide excoriations, the long sufferings of the healing process, often interrupted in its progress by new flagellations, and by continued labours in the meantime, before the human frame can have so completely lost its sensibility, as no longer to shrink from the most torturous mode of punishment that cruelty has, perhaps, ever inflicted without speedy destruction of life.

I do not mean, indeed, to ascribe such shocking effects wholly, or chiefly, to the punishments of which the drivers are the arbiters. I understand the authors I have cited as including in the causes of them, and for the most part having directly in view, the more heavy flagellations of a penal kind, inflicted at the homestall by the immediate order of the manager or overseer; but beyond doubt, the far more numerous inflictions of the drivers during the work, must tend powerfully to the progressive insensibility they speak of; and what is, perhaps, of more importance, to the moral insensibility of the masters, and to the severe punishments they ordain. A slave accustomed to feel the smart of the driver's whip for slackness, whether real or imputed, in his ordinary work, is not thought likely to be deterred from repeating offences deserving punishment, by a slight or moderate infliction of the same corporal pain; and women also lose in such cases, the compassion due to their sex, from a knowledge, that their natural timidity and sensibility have been in great measure worn off by the harsh discipline of the field. Hence doubtless, in no small degree, the extreme severity with which the cart-whip is so often ap-

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* Ibid.

† Remarks on the situation of Negroes in Jamaica, p. 40.

plied by order of the manager or overseer; and for offences commonly of no greater magnitude than desertion, or even truantcy of a day's duration. Many managers think it not too much in such cases to inflict a cart-whipping, in its regular and terrible form, on women as well as men, to the full extent of the thirty-nine lashes allowed by law, and even to order, that they shall be severely applied; which amounts, perhaps, to torture as intense as the human frame is well capable of feeling.* Such masters might truly, however inadequately, allege in their defence, that it would be idle to order a few lashes, when the fugitive or truant might probably have escaped as many from the driver's hands, even by a day's absence from the field. The exemplary effect would be wholly lost; and the offender, if long absent, would in consequence of the fault, avoid not only the pains of hard labour, but lessen, perhaps, on the whole, his or her sufferings by the whip.

Some of the apologists of the driving method tell us, that without it, punishments by the master's order for neglect of work, would be more frequent. Possibly they might for some time; at least if the master attempted to exact, in the mode of task-work, the same extent of daily toil as the driving-whip had before enforced; but he would probably soon find this impracticable; and be glad to relieve himself by moderation in the tasks, from the endless and fruitless drudgery of sitting in judgment every day, between a large proportion of his slaves and the accusing drivers, now *in truth* become only superintendants of their work. The evil might thus cure itself; and if the punishments were more frequent in the mean time, they would for the reasons assigned, be less severe. They would also be more equal and impartial; for the master's interest, if not his feelings, would be on the side

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* I will not here cite any of the numberless proofs to be found of such severity in the official accounts laid before, and printed by, parliament, for cruelty in punishments is one of the topics I have declined, though obliged here and elsewhere to advert to it as incidental to the subject of labour. Whoever wishes for full satisfaction, as to the frequency of such severities, need only read the extracts from those parliamentary documents given in the Anti-slavery Reports. But in an appendix which I have promised upon other views, the above statements will be sufficiently verified.

of equality and justice. He would not have like those sub-despots, the drivers, among their fellow-slaves, connexions, and attachments, and rivalships, and enmities to warp him, either in the apportionment of labour to individuals, or the punishment of their defaults.

Reasonably do those planters whom I have cited and have yet to cite, as to the ordinary conduct of the driver, consider the abuse of his power as a natural consequence of his authority. Their express testimony was not necessary to prove it; for it would be strange to suppose, that men destitute of religious and moral education, are guarded by native feelings of humanity and justice, against those abuses to which arbitrary power in the best of hands commonly seduces its possessors; and that, those feelings too are proof against the obdurating influence of habit, among men whose daily and hourly business it is to impose harsh restraints, and inflict severe punishments with their own hands, upon their fellow-creatures.

We expect no such incorruptible virtue in our public executioners or gaolers; nor are we much surprised, when we read reports of the apathy with which men, even in a liberal profession, regard the cruel treatment of pauper lunatics, long placed under their own immediate charge; still less at the obduracy of the keepers they employ. Where then is that moral charter to be found, that exempts the enslaved negro-driver, from the corrupting influence of habits still more inveterate, and more directly opposed to every benevolent feeling? Certainly not, if our planters are to be believed, in their African extraction, or sympathy with their own injured race; for we are incessantly told, though I confess untruly, that they make, when free, the worst of masters; and even in slavery are tyrants to each other.

"That negroes are cruel to one another," says *Mr. Beckford*, "cannot be denied; they will assassinate without com-"punction," &c. "I have observed that new negroes are par-"ticularly fond of power; and will exert it as if accustomed "to severity; and when raised to the authority of drivers, will "be more despotic and inhuman than the creoles are."*

* Remarks, &c. p. 87-8.

The distinction may be doubted; but that both are cruel, and their abuses not likely to be restrained by the overseers, he shews in several parts of his work.

"I am sorry to observe," he says "that punishments in "Jamaica, are often inflicted upon the bodies of the negroes "without discretion, and very frequently rather to gratify re- "venge, than for the sake of example. An overseer who is "addicted to drink, will not make any discrimination in the "absence of reason, between the generally laborious and ac- "cidentally idle, *and there are drivers upon some plantations "who will sleep over the work of the negroes committed to their "charge when the white people are absent, but who will use the "whip without necessity as soon as one shall appear in sight.* "I am willing to believe that it is sometimes meant as a "warning; but why make a mockery of punishment, or suffer "that to be considered as sport to an able negro, that intimi- "dates and consequently becomes pain to those who are sick "and weakly? I am convinced that custom and bad exam- "ple have a fatal influence upon the conduct of the genera- "lity of white people in Jamaica; many of whom imagine "that the appearance of discipline is a spur to labour, and "that negroes will not work unless roused by the sound "of the whip."*

I hope my readers will remember that this was written by a defender of slavery, and the slave-trade: and at a time too when the power of the drivers to use the whip, was as boldly denied by some eminent planters, as it is by the legislators of St. Vincent's, and by the accredited champions of all the colonies, in the present day.

Mr. Stewart, after the passage which I have cited from his wook, (supra, p. 133,) as to the partiality and injustice of the driver, adds, "He makes a shew, by way of saving appear- "ances of equal severity to both, (i. e. to a slave whom he "favours, and one whom he dislikes,) but by the dextrous "command he has of the whip, he has it in his power to in- "flict either a very slight, or a very severe punishment. On "such occasions, the persecuted slave is too often afraid to

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* Remarks, &c. p. 41, 42, in the notes.

" complain to his master; thinking it would lead to renewed " persecutions; and though there are doubtless men in the " situation of overseers who would not permit such barbari- " ties were they aware of them, it is equally true that there " are others who will support the authority of their drivers, " however iniquitously exercised.*

It is not from harshness or violence of temper, alone that these coarse and degraded agents of despotic authority, are prone to abuse their power among the negroes whom they drive. They have not only their friends, and their enemies, their mistresses, and their rivals in the gang, but fellow-slaves who sometimes work for them on Sundays, or carry to market articles they have for sale; while others, no doubt, may have been found unwilling so to entitle themselves to favour; and can it be doubted that such considerations often unfairly impel or withhold the lash, while they are following the poor drudges in the field?

By no conceivable means can injustice and cruelty in the exercise of the driver's discretionary powers, while they are suffered to exist, be controuled. For this also I have quoted the authority of Mr. Stewart. But how can it be questioned by any thinking mind? Among all the idle pretences by which the odious system has been palliated and disguised, there is none more self-evidently preposterous than that the manager or overseer, unavoidably absent from the field during great part of the day, can judge between the drivers and the driven, so as to check partiality and oppression in each individual instance. If the poor slave, whipped up repeatedly during the work, for not throwing his hoe with sufficient celerity or momentum, were bold enough to complain on returning to the homestall, against a man who is to drive him again in the morning, and during every day of his life, how is he to prove his case?

Let it be supposed that his fellow-labourers are so daringly generous as to be willing to support the charge; yet how can this testimony avail him? They were each intent on

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* Stewart's View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica, App. 346, 347.

† Supra, p. 132.

his own particular share of the work; and can no more determine whether the complainant was in fault, than a private soldier in line upon parade, whether the other men shouldered or presented their arms with precision, or dressed with due correctness. The accused driver himself is the only competent witness; and were the statement of the injured slave to prevail against his denial of the charge, this species of subordination, so essential in the eyes of our planters, could not possibly be maintained.

The idea of a manager holding a tribunal at the end of the day's work to hear and try the complaints of fifty or a hundred negroes, or as many of them as may think the whip had been in some instances needlessly applied to their backs, is preposterous. It may serve, like the other extravagant fables of the colonists, to deceive European readers, who will not stop to reason on these painful subjects; but a few moments of reflection will suffice to shew that it is quite incredible. If managers and overseers were the very reverse of what they in general are, if they were the most intelligent and industrious of mankind, such judicial functions would be more than enough to occupy all their time, and exhaust all their energies; whereas the duties they are really expected to perform, are confessedly fully equal to, if not surpassing, any ordinary powers. Committing as they unavoidably do, the details of the field work, implicitly to the drivers, their general inadequacy to the various important labours which belong to the agricultural and manufacturing business of a plantation, and the government of its multudinous gang, is nevertheless universally admitted.

It may be useful here to give a few specimens of what my antagonists state as to the great personal consequence of the drivers; and as to the character of those white agents by whom they are said to be controuled.

Let me quote in the first place, *The Jamaica Planter's Guide*, published in 1823, by "*Mr. Thomas Roughley*, nearly "twenty years a sugar planter in Jamaica." So he is described in his title page; and his readers will find him a thorough-paced defender of the system he had so long administered. He is, to use a reigning phraseology, a perfect *ultra* in his attachment to the cause of slavery; and in his enmity to all who oppose it. This writer says "The most

" important personage in the slave population of an estate is " the head driver. He is seen carrying with him the emblems " of his rank and dignity, a polished staff, or wand with " prongy crooks on it to lean on, and a short handled tangible " whip; his office combining within itself a power, derived " principally from the overseer, of directing all conditions of " slaves relative to the precise work he wishes each gang or " mechanic to undergo or execute, &c. There are so many " points to turn to, so many occasions for his skill, vigilance, " steadiness and trustworthiness, that the selection of such " a man fit for such a place requires circumspection and an " intimate knowledge of his talents and capacity. A bad or " indifferent head driver, sets almost every thing at variance, " injures the negroes, and the culture of the estate: He is " like a cruel blast that pervades every thing, and spares no- " thing," &c.*

This experienced manager proceeds to shew us the various evils resulting from the faults of the drivers; but among them we do not find any mention of troublesome appeals to the manager or overseers; and his language plainly shews that it is not from the complaints of the slaves, but from the effects only on their disposition and conduct, that the abuses of driving are to be discovered. " When the drivers are ill- " disposed, he, the overseer (which in Jamaica means the " head manager), will perceive the negroes likewise so: the " work will not be carried on agreeably to his dictates: " things suffer in general: the slaves run away, or are in- " clined to be turbulent, &c.: they even aim," he adds, " at " the existence of the white people. The root, then, of this " evil must be struck at, and the head driver and his abettors " sent to public punishment."*

The words of an apologist cannot more intelligibly shew that the pretence of an intimate daily superintendance and controul of this " sub-despot," as Dr. Collins calls him, in the particular cases of oppressed individuals, is utterly unfounded. He is known only by his general and aggregate fruits; the general ill-will, discontent, and despair of the

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* Jamaica Planters' Guide, p. 1. † Ibid. 82, 83.

unfortunate gang, when his tyranny is pushed to excess, are the only indications of their sufferings that can commonly meet the master's notice. Injured individuals, instead of daring to complain of the driver, run away; and like a bad minister, or rather like a cruel gaoler, the only remedy is his removal, or punishment, when his general maladministration becomes so visible as to call for that which is a kind of revolution on the estate.

Is it likely, that even in such extreme cases, the remedy is often applied, or that the drivers are controuled even when complaints can be tried? To determine that question, it will be useful next to shew what my opponents confess as to the ordinary character of managers or overseers.

Let us mark the candid avowal of Mr. De la Beche on this subject: — "I by no means wish to state that the overseers "always lean to the side of justice, believing that not one-"half of them are qualified to wield the powers that under "existing circumstances must necessarily be entrusted to "them."*

"If an overseer," says Mr. Stewart, "be a man of educa-"tion and feeling, and that feeling has not been extinguished "by habits certainly not calculated to soften the heart or "improve the manners, he has it in his power to impart "much good in his situation. He may soften the hardships "of the slaves, and render their toils more easy; he may "hear and redress their complaints, &c. It would be a "happy circumstance for the slaves if such characters were "more common than they are among this class of persons; "but the chief ambition of too many is rather who shall "make the largest crops, the finest quality of sugar, &c., "than who shall govern the slaves placed under their care "with the greatest moderation and humanity."

As to the ordinary "education and feelings" of the overseers or head managers in Jamaica, the same writer is painfully instructive; but his statements and remarks are too long for insertion here. They extend from the 188th to the 195th page of his work, and are well worthy of the attention of such

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* See the quotation at large, supra, p. 74.

readers as desire to have just ideas of the situation of plantation slaves, so far as respects the character of their immediate masters, in the very ordinary case of the owners' absence in Europe. The general effect is, that the men who fill the situations of overseers in Jamaica are promoted to them from those of *book-keepers*, in which they must previously have served five or six years; and the account which he gives of the situations, treatment, and habits of the latter, during that long novitiate, is in the highest degree revolting and appalling. The negro slaves themselves are hardly more despised than these "voluntary slaves," as Mr. Stewart rather inaptly calls them; inaptly, because they are commonly poor ignorant lads, sent out from the mother country under indentures, their will to enter into which preceded all knowledge of the degraded and miserable state they were to be sent to. The appellation "*book-keeper*" is strangely "misplaced;" for as the same author observes, "a man who had "never seen an account book in his life, may yet be a very "expert book-keeper." But it probably serves, and was no doubt intended to do so, like the tricks of a recruiting serjeant, to seduce into the plantation bonds many a raw stripling, who would have spurned at the more proper name of a white negro-driver.

Mr. Stewart thinks, and I agree with him, that such of them as have received but little education, who "have been "accustomed from their earliest years to a rustic and drudg-"ing life, who in short have directed the plough, or wielded "the pitchfork, in their native country, are not so much to "be sympathised with, as those who have been liberally "educated."

But I doubt, whether he is right in supposing, as he seems to do, that liberality of education in these unfortunate youths, would qualify better for the office of overseers, such of them as may live to attain it; for in proportion to the refinement of former feelings and ideas, must probably be not only the pain, but the corrupting and obdurating effects of the situation to which they are forced to submit, and the harsh duties they have to perform. The more violence that is done to liberal and virtuous feelings at the outset, the greater will be their ultimate ruin. Mr. Stewart, indeed, admits, that if the better

educated youth, does not find resource and consolation during his painful and degrading service, by reading at his solitary hours, he is likely "to contract low depraved habits," to renounce his better feelings, and "*become seared with a reckless* "*apathy*." Now, that he should resort sufficiently to such an antidote, is, upon our author's premises, not very likely; for he tells us, that the poor book-keeper has little time that he can possibly give to reading; that even Sunday is not altogether his own; and that "it would be unpardonable to allow "books to interfere with the business of the estate."

The colonial advocates often appeal to our national feelings, by asking, whether it is probable, that in a white population, constantly recruited from this country, the slave-masters should generally be found to have left their native humanity and liberality on this side of the Atlantic? At the same time we are told, not very consistently, that Europeans very often, I think, by some it is said, *generally*, are more severe masters than the creole whites. I believe, that this latter plea, is not wholly unfounded in fact; but the answer to both is, that before Europeans become slave-masters on a plantation, they are long, howsoever reluctantly at first, trained and hackneyed to the administration of its odious discipline; and that, when virtuous propensities are subdued by temptation, and yield to habitual controul, it is natural in this, as in other cases, that the moral victim should not only lose his former sensibility, but pass beyond others in the vices he once abhorred. The more force it requires to strain the bow, the further the arrow flies. We are not surprised to find in women, who have thrown off, from strong temptations perhaps at first, the restraints of their native modesty and virtue, a degree of impudence and profligacy, beyond that of the coarser sex.

Whatever be the causes, the fact, that West India overseers are too commonly of a harsh and unfeeling character, is attested beyond dispute. To the authorities that I have cited, I might add many more. Even *Mr. Roughley*, that most determined defender of the general system, sufficiently discloses that truth. His censures on the overseers, indeed, are chiefly pointed at their morose and tyrannical conduct towards the unfortunate book-keepers; but if it could be doubted, whether the same disposition must be felt by their still more helpless

dependents with black skins, one of his own incidental remarks would remove it; "his temper is soured by frequent "casualties of this nature, (i. e. by frequent breaches with "his white assistants,) *and vents itself often with terrible "consequences upon the slaves under him.*"* He speaks, indeed, of such men chiefly, as "Overseers, of the *old school;*" but while he illustrates their savage conduct by recent and shocking instances, he does not tell us, that any *new school* is generally established; and his anxious advice to absent proprietors, to change their ordinary choice of attornies and other agents, sufficiently betrays his consciousness of the reverse. The whole of his long chapter on plantation attornies and agents is, on this and other subjects, highly instructive; at least when read as the language of a man, who had been for twenty years an administrator of the system, and whose anxious endeavour it is to reconcile it to the feelings of the British public.

But let me not deal unfairly with the overseers and managers. It is not solely, nor chiefly, to misconduct on their parts, that the cruelties of the driving system are to be ascribed. These strictures on their characters are cited only to shew, that a humane controul on their part, of the driver's conduct in the ordinary use of the coercing whip, which I have shewn to be for the most part impracticable, is not likely to be often attempted, at a grievous expense of their time and ease, even to the small extent in which such controul is possible. Without even taking into account the indolence and love of ease, to which men of all descriptions are proverbially prone in that country, enough has been shewn of the case, to make such very onerous humanity hopeless. Implicit confidence in the drivers, is the manager's or overseer's only easy chair; and he must be a man of very active benevolence, who should be willing to resign it, as often as would be necessary to decide such differences even as are capable of fair investigation, between the drivers and the driven. To encourage complaints, would be to make his office more laborious than that of the driver himself.

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* Jamaica Planters' Guide, p. 51. † See Chapter I. throughout.

Besides, the overseers are not generally at liberty to consult their own feelings, but are impelled to exact such an excess of labour as is incompatible with humane restrictions on the driver's coercive discipline. "There are not wanting *attornies*," says *Mr. Stewart*, "who, anxious to outdo their predecessors "in the magnitude of the crops, and thereby forward their "own interest and reputation, too often act as a stimulus, "instead of a restraint on this impolitic and unfeeling zeal of "the overseers, by continually reminding them of the quan-"tum of produce, and of work they expect."*

I wish this intelligent writer had not stopped here. He might have shewn how the attornies, in their turn, are stimulated to the same avaricious oppression by the proprietors resident in this country, and their commercial consignees.

Why are the attornies remunerated in proportion only to the quantities of sugar they consign? The general, and I believe in Jamaica the only, reward of their services, is a commission on the produce shipped. I think it is either a guinea per hogshead, or 5 per cent. A premium on the preservation, and native increase of the slaves, or even a draw-back on the commissions when the deaths exceed the births, would have widely different effects; but I never heard of any instance of such a humane departure from the general practice; and believe, that no such exeeption to it is any where alleged.

SECTION V.—*The only remedy for these mischiefs, compatible with forced labour, is* INDIVIDUAL *task-work.*

Here I have to open a most lamentable, and at the same time a most undeniable part of the case—the unjust and cruel effects of a wholesale method of coercion, which like the bed of Procrustes, levels almost all inequalities of health and strength, or makes them sources of inevitable miseries, at least to the weaker slaves.

Let the reader look back on my description of driving, as extracted from my earliest publication on slavery, and on the

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* Ibid. p. 188.

decisive authorities by which I have evinced its correctness; and he will see, that the want of discrimination between the different degrees of strength of the individual labourers of both sexes, driven forward together in line or file, is one of its most prominent but essential mischiefs. If the standard of forced exertion, in point of time and intensity, were reduced to the capacity of the weakest, there might in this respect, be no ground of complaint; but I have shewn, that it is on the contrary, such, as without experience we should hardly believe, the strongest could long endure.

Dr. Collins after confirming, as has been shewn, my strictures on this cruel consequence of the driving method, nearly in the very words I used, suggests to the planters a remedy, or rather a palliative, which further marks the character of the general practice. "In order that the weak may not work "too much, nor the strong too little, it is advisable to di- "vide your force into a greater number of sections or gangs," &c.*

Inadequate as this expedient must prove, the partial improvement has not been generally if any where adopted. It appears from Mr. De la Beche and Mr. Stewart, and even from Mr. Roughley's accounts, that the number of sections or gangs now in use, is not greater than it was when Dr. Collins published his valuable work.

Conscious that the remedy would be at best but partial, Dr. Collins speaks favorably of the only effectual one, the disuse of driving, and substitution of task-work, when possible; a change which had been recommended by example in many parts of the American continent. He shews how much it would tend to encourage, as well as ease the labourers; whereas nothing, as he observes, "can depress them more than a tire- "some routine of duty, which presents no prospect of end, "relief, or recompense."† He regarded task-work, indeed, as not in most cases practicable; though the reasons he assigns for it, seem not very easy to comprehend, and even to be at

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* Practical Rules, 176, &c. See extract, p. 55, 6, supra.

† Practical Rules, p. 179.

variance with his own views in the context. But my readers shall judge of his meaning from his own language.

"The misfortune is," he says, "that the rule is applicable "only to a very few; from the necessity of dividing our ne- "groes, as above recommended, into several gangs, and the "various kinds of work which they have respectively to exe- "cute, and the fluctuation of their numbers from day to day "by sickness or other circumstances, which rejects every idea "of their labouring universally on such a system; but when- "ever it is found practicable in any case, it ought to be done. "The several kinds of business assigned to the strong gang "are of that description, and of course subject to such regu- "lation, as you have the same power to execute the same "service daily; for should any of your strong gang fall sick, "or give out at their work, you have the means of replacing "them, by occasional draughts from your middle gang, which "will contain some negroes robust enough to supply their "place, until they return to their labour; so as always to keep "up the number of holers."*

The solution of the apparent difficulty in these passages, I conceive to be this: Dr. Collins had in view, when he recommended task-work, the assessment of a daily portion of the work required, not *on each individual slave*, but on the *collective gang*. His habits as a planter, and long-resident colonist, naturally led him to that use of the word; for task-work is a well-known term in the West Indies; and means the performing a given portion of work by contract, when the slaves are hired for the purpose, of a master who is not the owner of the soil; and it is chiefly in use in the laborious process of holeing, which Dr. Collins appears clearly by the context to have had chiefly in view. The owner of the slaves, commonly called a "task-work," or "jobbing-gang," contracts to hole for a given price, so many acres of land; and our author probably meant, that the great gang of the estate might be tasked collectively, with adequate portions of the same species of work, to be accomplished in a limited time. But did he also mean, that the driver's immediate coercion should be withdrawn? If not,

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* Ibid. p. 178, 9.

there would be little, if any, diminution of the evils, which he wished to remove. The task-work gangs in use, are worked under the contractor's own drivers; and it is agreed on both sides, that their condition is not better, but rather worse, than that of the plantation slaves.

It is probably now of great practical importance to mark well the distinction between collective, and individual task-work; for in some of the colonies, where the crown has legislative authority, driving is now prohibited by law; and it is said, that it is accordingly laid aside in practice, and *task-work* adopted in its stead; an innovation, the effects of which, the planters will of course be desirous to depreciate. But it is highly probable, not only from the long established use of the term, but from the regard of managers to their own ease and convenience, that where such a substitution has been made, the tasks have been assessed, not on each individual slave, but on the gangs that had usually worked together; e. g. that they should hole a particular cane-piece, or a certain proportion of it, in a given time. Such a method cannot be expected to operate satisfactorily, or not to be attended with some highly inconvenient effects; for how are individuals to enforce from each other their fair contributions to the accomplishment of the general task?

It is not very uncommon for a small number of workmen in this country, mutually to contract with their employer to perform a given service by their united efforts for a common reward; as to cut down a field of hay, at a certain price per acre; but they are, or suppose themselves to be, of nearly equal capacity; and can depend on each other for equal exertion, because a failure in it is what they would have power to punish, if not in the division of the price, at least by reproach, and by an exclusion from such associated undertakings in future. But in a gang of slaves, of very unequal degrees of strength, and whose union in work is neither by choice, nor of brief duration, but imposed on them for life by authority they cannot resist, there can be no security whatever for a fair and equal contribution to the common task, though all may have the same interest in obtaining by its speedy accomplishment an earlier dismission from the field. Endless quarrels among

themselves, and incessant appeals to the master, must be expected to ensue.

I am far from thinking, that the dismission of the whip from the field would not still be a benefit, especially when use had taught them the advantages of fair and amicable co-operation; but it is *individual* task-work alone, impartially and moderately assessed by the master, that can form such a substitute for driving as to produce the proper effects, by giving to every slave a fair and adequate interest in his or her own exertions.

This, however, would impose new and onerous duties on the managers and overseers; and it was therefore, I presume, that Dr. Collins seems not to have extended his views to so important an improvement as that of *individual task-work;* for he was fully impressed as appears in various parts of his work, with the extreme difficulty to be encountered in every reformation of the established system, that would demand from its white administrators much additional energy in the discharge of their important functions; or from the proprietors an expensive addition to the number of those important agents. The allotting to each working individual in a gang of 150 or 200 slaves daily, or even weekly, his or her separate task, and taking cognizance of its due performance or neglect, would certainly be a new burthen on the management of no trivial amount, and such as that well-informed writer probably thought it in vain to propose.

The dreadful alternative, however, of adhering to the present method of brutal coercion is such as it would be well worth every sacrifice to avoid; for it is not only an opprobrious degradation of our species, and cruel injustice when applied to innocent men, but largely and unavoidably destructive of their health and lives.

One of its indisputably cruel and murderous effects demands particular notice, and has not hitherto, I think, met with the attention it deserves. I mean the impossibility of reconciling with the system, in a multitude of cases, the allowance of such alleviations or temporary suspensions of labour to individuals, as sickness or weakness may render necessary for the recovery of health and the preservation of life.

Even in this temperate and healthy climate it is not uncom-

mon that languor, weariness, and debility, proceeding from no apparent cause, are the first symptoms of a serious disease. Hard working people of both sexes, sometimes find themselves unfit to go to their ordinary work; or are obliged during the progress of it, to pause, sit down, or retire, from sensations that they can ill explain; though to resist them, might not only be painful but dangerous. With men and women working under a vertical sun, in a climate where the first sense of disease is often but a brief prelude to its crisis, such cases cannot but be very frequent; yet, to allow the slaves to remain in their huts, or to suspend or quit their work in the field, on the plea of weakness or weariness alone, would be incompatible with the driving system. Such pleas would be perpetually brought forward, if they were always or often to prevail; for that the poor people dislike the toil they are driven to, and would always obtain a suspension of it if they could, will hardly, I presume, be doubted.

Should any authorities be desired for such natural consequences of forced labour, or to shew that fatal effects often unavoidably result from overruling the plea of weakness or sickness when truly alleged, better evidence of both cannot be desired than what has been furnished by that long-experienced planter and physician, Dr. Collins.

" You must expect," says he, " that your negroes, from a " constant desire of sparing themselves, will under different " pretexts, be for changing their divisions, and taking a sta- " tion where they are required to do less, as you will find them " all desirous of doing no more than they can avoid. You " must necessarily check these attempts, unless you are satis- " fied, that there is a real necessity for indulging them, by " such evidence of their impaired strength, as you can no longer " doubt."†

He is here speaking in reference to his proposed classification, and the desire to pass from the strong into the weaker gang; but on the ordinary claims of indulgence, or exemption from work, he speaks more copiously in his

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* P. 184.

chapter on the sick, a few extracts from which may suffice:

"Sorry am I that the subject requires me to say, that no "part of negro management has been more neglected, or erro- "neously performed, than that which regards the treatment "of the sick. I have seen many slaves that were compelled "to persevere at their work, who ought to have been in the "hospital. This may have arisen sometimes from the im- "patience of the master to advance his work; but I believe "much more generally, from the difficulty which he is under, "of distinguishing real from affected illness; for when labour "presses, all would be ill to escape the field; and it is not at "all times in the power of the doctor to discover the impo- "sition."*

He proceeds, in that and the following chapter, to give such an account of the general neglect of the sick, and the ordinary state of the hospitals and sick-houses, as would be well worth the perusal of those who have been taught to believe, that the humanity of masters, and their regard to their own interest, are sufficient pledges for the good treatment of the slaves; but this part of the system well deserves a separate consideration, and I will here extract only one passage or two that are in point to my immediate subject; as they shew to what miseries the poor slaves will submit to escape from the driving-whip.

"It is in vain to dissemble," says he, "that the sick are "but too frequently neglected; for the hospital being rather "a disgusting scene, charged with unpleasant odours, and "occupied by offensive objects, it is no wonder that men "should neglect a duty the performance of which is attended "with painful emotions." "The negroes are overlooked or for- "gotten, they linger in misery and pine in neglect, and if "they recover, you may be assured it is nature that has car- "ried them through the disorder."†

Even with the improvements which he in this respect suggests, the hospital would be apparently a most deterring abode. It is in fact a *prison*, which he says, should be "secured by

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* P. 236. † Ibid. p. 253-4.

" bars or jealousies to prevent the escape of the negroes;" and to prevent the nurses' connivance at their going out by night, he advises to have the key of the outer door brought in the evening to the manager's house. He states also, that " it is " usual on many estates, when the negroes are in the hospital, " to give them no other food than what their friends sup- " ply."

All this would seem to make the hospital, or sick-house, as it is more usually called, no very desirable retreat. Yet, he says, " If your humanity disposes you to be very indulgent to " your negroes, or if their labour be at all severe, &c., your " sick-house will probably be crowded with complainants, " some of whom will be really ill, while others only affect to " be so, either from natural indolence of disposition, or from " their having overslept themselves, being afraid of going to " the field, lest they should be punished for the delay. It is " your business to ascertain from which of these causes their " presence in the hospital arises; and this is a task of no or- " dinary difficulty; as every art will be used to mislead and " deceive you."*

He proceeds to give suggestions as to the best means of lessening this difficulty, and therein observes, " You will find " others, who without any illness to which you can give a " name, have notwithstanding a claim to your indulgence, " for they have been harassed by the preceding day's work, " and feel languid and exhausted. This happens frequently " to very old negroes, whose constitutions are not very robust, " and may happen to others, even of the strongest, after great " exertions and hard continued work for too great length of " time. You may the more safely *indulge them with the sick-* " *house*, under the assurance, that they will remain there no " longer than is really necessary for their recovery."

" Some negroes may be really indisposed, though they are " without any of the symptoms which indicate indisposition, " but as it is impossible for you to judge with certainty in " such cases, and as the business of the plantation could be " very ill-performed, if you were indiscriminately to indulge

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* Ibid. p. 259.

"all who prefer rest to labour, you must be governed by the "general habits and reputation of the negro, &c. You may "expect to be often deceived; but if a man is to to err, it "should be on the side of humanity."*

Those who have ever allowed themselves to be deceived by the impostures of other colonists, surely cannot read passages like this without astonishment. "How," they may reasonably exclaim, "do the planters attempt to reconcile such fea- "tures of their system, with the accounts they give us of the "lightness of slave labour, of the hilarity with which it is per- "formed, and of the copious leisure and manifest comforts "and recreations, nay the dissipation and luxury, which are "enjoyed by the labouring slave?" I answer they do not attempt it at all. They are too prudent to notice the admissions of men of their own party, whose credit they know it is in vain to impeach, especially such men as Dr. Collins. They have a less hopeless game to play; like that of the counsel for a defendant in a desperate case, who is too prudent to state and answer the evidence he has to grapple with, but endeavours to draw off the attention of the jury from its effect by lauding the general character and conduct of his client, and by insidious imputations on the plaintiff. They rely on the inattention or forgetfulness of the British public in a long and wearisome controversy; and hope, not I fear in vain, that bold generalities of assertion, however irreconcilable with the established facts, mixed up with incessant railings against their opponents, as fanatics, enthusiasts, and incendiaries, will supply the place of sound or consistent argument, and fair investigation.

But those impartial minds who feel it a duty in this cause of helpless and oppressed multitudes to reason before they decide, will see enough even in the last extracts I have given, to beat down all the sophistry, and all the falsehood of their oppressors; for what must be the irksomeness of that labour, what the severity of that discipline, to escape from which a loathsome hospital, and close imprisonment, is so coveted an asylum, that the slaves resort to falsehood, and artful imposture,

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* Ibid. p. 260, 261, 262.

at the peril of the cart-whip, to obtain it! What must be thought here of the audacious comparison with the state of the free peasantry of England! The wages of our agricultural labourers are often lamentably low, and their comforts scanty enough; but when were they found desirous to exchange their employment in the field, to obtain, under the pretence of sickness, admission into our hospitals, or the parish workhouses? the worst of which are most desirable abodes when compared to a plantation sick-house.

What I would chiefly here draw the attention of my readers to, however, is the admitted ordinary difficulty, and frequent impossibility of distinguishing between real and pretended incapacity for labour; and this not by the drivers only, but by the proprietor or his manager, and even by the medical practitioner, called the doctor of the estate. If it is hard or impossible for *them* to determine in the case of the slave who asks as "an indulgence," and a boon, an exchange of the field for the hospital, on the score of debility or disease, whether the plea is well or ill founded, surely it must be still more out of the power of the drivers, to decide such a question during the long protracted labours of the day, when individuals of the gang under their discipline, work with langour, and allege bodily indisposition as the cause. I do not indeed find it any where alleged that the driver's authority extends to the allowance of any such excuse, so as to dismiss them from the field. I believe he has no such power; and as to that of sparing them in their share of the forced exertions, let the reader recollect what I have before cited from the same high authority, "*your drivers, insensible of the cause of their backwardness, or* "*not weighing it properly, will incessantly urge them with stripes* "*or threats to keep up with the others, by which means they are* "*overwrought and compelled to resort to the sick-house;*" i. e. on their return to the homestall.

Let not the drivers bear unjustly the whole reproach of this insensibility, for how could they possibly distinguish, if permitted to do so, between real inability and disinclination for the requisite exertion, when it is admitted that that the latter is so general, as always to furnish a probable motive for dissimulation; and that the former is frequently so well feigned as to deceive the most intelligent and expert? In all probability it is often

truly alleged in the field during work by the very individuals who had been refused the asylum of the sick-house when they craved it from the manager in the morning; and is the driver to receive an appeal from that judgment? He has a certain force committed as effective to his direction: at his own peril of servile punishment, the appointed work must be accomplished by the gang; and were he to spare any individual who alleges incompetency to his proper share of it, the common task could not be fully performed.

It is not then to be imputed to the drivers, nor always to the overseer or manager, nor even to the doctor, if he is consulted,* when a feeble or sick slave, is driven all day long to the most arduous exertions under a tropical sun, kept to his labours till midnight, and obliged to resume them at the earliest dawn, though all the while diseased and exhausted nature is pleading earnestly for repose. The fault is inherent in the unnatural and opprobrious system of coercion itself; and could no other cause be assigned for the shocking waste of life upon sugar estates, in a race uncommonly robust and prolific, this might be enough amply to account for it.

I might further enlarge on this odious practice of driving. I might shew by evidence equally beyond dispute, its pernicious effects on the weaker sex, especially in their times of pregnancy. I might shew how incompatible it is with all the proper incentives to virtuous industry, how infallibly it produces an aversion to voluntary labour, destroys every germ of civilization, precludes advances in moral and intellectual character,

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* Doctor Collins, indeed, censures, and not without reason, the frequent conduct of medical practitioners in such cases: "He (the doctor) pops "into the hospital and questions the sick; when, if the pulse neither in- "dicates fever, nor the frequency of evacuations a flux, he concludes there "is no disorder, and the negro is dismissed to the field; yet even by this "attendance, superficial as it is, he earns dearly enough the slender "stipend that is allowed him. (p. 254.) Dearly indeed! since he must "either be the daily dupe of his unfortunate patients, to the ruin of his "own credit and practice, or risk the subjecting them by his errors to un- "just and cruel, and even to fatal effects. I have heard such men "complain of this branch of their duty as an intolerable burthen on their "feelings."

hardens the heart of the master, and brutifies the slave. But these topics may be pretty safely left to the reflections of every considerate reader; and I ought not, without necessity, to extend the limits of a work, that is already, I fear, too bulky for the time and patience of active and influential minds.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PLANTATION SLAVES IS IN A VERY OPPRESSIVE AND CRUEL DEGREE PARSIMONIOUS AND INSUFFICIENT.

SECTION I. — *This Proposition shewn to be highly probable from the Nature of the Case.*

HAVING demonstrated that the forced labour on sugar estates is oppressively severe, in all the various views I have taken of it, in its duration, its intensity, and the means of its exaction, and that the consequences are highly cruel and pernicious; I have next, in pursuance of the plan proposed, to state "the ordinary treatment of the slaves in respect of "food, clothing, and other necessaries, under the general head "of maintenance:" and first, as to the most important article, *food*.

But here, as in the preceding branches of my subject, I have prepossessions to encounter, as well as bold and artful and assiduous misrepresentations of the actual practice, to refute; I will, therefore, again request my readers to reflect on the inherent probabilities of the case, before I state the facts to them, and adduce the evidence.

It was shewn that the natural and inevitable tendency of the master's avarice or selfishness, armed with irresistible power, and even of his necessities, consequent on the eager competition that has long prevailed between planters, both British and foreign, in the supply of the European markets with sugar, must be to cheapen the forced labour employed in its production, to a degree highly oppressive upon

the helpless enslaved workmen by whom the commodity is raised. From this consideration and others, it was inferred *à priori*, that the exaction of forced labour was likely to have been pushed to excess; and I trust that the inference has now been abundantly confirmed by such evidence of the fact as no candid mind can resist.

Now, the same reasoning tends, and with equal force, to raise a high probability that the slaves are too penuriously maintained: for as the cost of their maintenance is a deduction from the annual proceeds of the estate, the lessening of this must be dictated by the same motives, or enforced by the same economical necessity, as the aggravation of the labour. Subsistence has not improperly been called "the wages of the "slave;" and a reduction in the rate of wages is a saving expedient at least as likely to be adopted by employers who have power for the purpose, as an increase in the quantum of work. Where the labourers are free, it is when competition presses on the master for œconomy, his first, because his most easy, if not only resort: but even in the treatment of slaves, it is easier to withhold than to exact; and especially when the quantum of forced labour already imposed is too great to be easily sustained.

Nor will this argument lose any of its force, if we suppose the slave to be chiefly or wholly maintained in respect of food, by means of his own labour, in raising provisions for himself; because the time and capacity for work allotted to that purpose, might otherwise be employed for the master's more direct and immediate profit, in the enlargement of his crops. It will be a perfectly fair, as well as the simplest and clearest, view of the subject, to regard the whole value of the maintenance, however supplied, as a deduction from the actual or potential proceeds of the estate.

When slaves are kept for the master's convenience, luxury, or state, not his agricultural or manufacturing profit, there is little or no temptation to subject them to any excess of labour; but only to stint them in their maintenance. This was, for the most part, the case in that slavery which is noticed in the apostolic writings; and we consequently find a precept opposed to the latter mode of oppression, "*Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal,*" but no

specific prohibition of imposing on them an undue quantum of work. With the sugar planter, on the contrary, whose profit from the labour of his slaves is his sole object in acquiring or keeping such property, the temptation to a selfish abuse of power is not only in the withholding what is just and equal, but in pushing the forced labour to excess.

In one view, indeed, the planter may be thought the most likely to exceed on the withholding, or penurious side; especially when money is to be paid for the articles of maintenance that he has to provide; for avarice is often seen to prompt men to be sparing in their immediate pecuniary disbursements, even at a great expence of their future gains.

The sugar planter's temptations on this side, are much enhanced by the great number of slaves he has to maintain. If, like English farmers, he had but three or four labourers constantly in employ, the difference between a moderate and severe economy in their subsistence, might be a saving little worth his attention; but having perhaps two hundred negroes, to be fed throughout the year, the saving a few pounds of flour or grain in the weekly rations of each individual, or the labour of half a day weekly in the time allowed for raising provisions, is felt by him as an important object. Let it be supposed that four pounds of flour per week ought to be added to the actual allowances, in order to make them, in a humane or equitable view, sufficient; and that this quantity of imported flour would cost a shilling. If so, the planter saves by the present scantiness of his rations, ten pounds every week, and no less than five hundred and twenty pounds per annum.

Can it be thought, then, that the same men who, whether from avaricious views, or by the constraint of their own necessities, have imposed on their slaves a cruel excess of labour, forcing them to work on an average sixteen hours and upwards, and often eighteen hours in the twenty-four, and depriving them in great measure of their sabbath rest, have resisted the stronger and nearer temptation of saving large sums, or gaining much exportable produce, by a too parsimonious scale of subsistence, or too scanty an allowance of time for raising it?

No counterpoise to the temptation can be suggested in the

one case, that does not exist in the other, to at least an equal degree. As to feelings of humanity, these, while unspoiled by habitual violence done to them in practice, might be expected to oppose rather more strongly any excess on the exacting, than on the withholding side; because the necessary means of giving effect to the former, are more actively and manifestly cruel, and more revolting to liberal minds. The sufferings of the hungry or ill-fed slave may not present themselves to the master's eyes or ears; but to force from him exertions beyond what his nature can sustain without distress, the whip must be ruthlessly employed.

It is enough, however, for my present purpose to contend, that where the one species of economical abuse prevails in a cruel degree, the other is not likely to be absent; and having proved to what a truly enormous excess the forced labour of slaves is carried on sugar estates, I am entitled to infer the great probability that their maintenance is not liberal; but in a high degree the reverse. "The same fountain does not cast forth at the same time sweet waters and bitter:" nor can we expect that the same masters who covetously and cruelly overwork their helpless bondsmen, deal out to them with a humane and liberal hand, the maintenance which is the price of their service.

Having looked thus far at the inherent probabilities of the case, let us next see what is the extent of past and present controversy as to the actual facts of it.

Section II. — *Extent of Controversy on this Subject.*

It was shewn in my former volume (p. 89—100), that in a very comprehensive class of ordinary cases, the inadequacy of subsistence was put out of dispute, by the express admissions of the colonists, the statements of their assemblies, and the recitals of their laws. When the planters are necessitous and embarrassed in their circumstances, their slaves, it was admitted, are not only scantily fed, but often subjected to absolute want. Now a large proportion of the sugar-

planters are at all times necessitous and embarrassed; as was abundantly shewn from the same authorities.*

It may seem therefore that there can be no question at issue between the colonial and anti-slavery parties as to sufficient or scanty feeding, that is not qualified with reference to the master's circumstances, or his ability to provide an adequate supply of food. But to assume this, would be to suppose the colonial party concluded by their own admissions or statements; and held to the vulgar rule of consistency in their propositions and reasonings; whereas the apologists of slavery seem to think that the difficulty of their undertaking entitles them always to play fast and loose with their own premises, and to contradict themselves and their employers as to matters of fact, and of argumentative deduction also, as often as it suits their purpose. Many of them, in this instance, notwithstanding the express admissions I have referred to, have stoutly maintained, and continue to assert, in the most universal and unqualified terms, that the slaves are abundantly fed; and have even derided, as absurd and incredible, every contrary statement by anti-slavery writers.

Should any reader, a stranger to this new style of controversy, ask, "then how do they dispose of the testimony given on their own side, when quoted against them?" I answer (as before, in regard to labour,) by leaving it wholly unnoticed. Like able generals in the improved art of war, they dash forward for the sake of immediate effect, with their full force of intrepid assertion and abuse, regardless of the strong positions before surrendered by themselves or their co-partizans which the enemy holds in their rear.

Sometimes they practice a still more dexterous and daring manœuvre, of which their professed reply to my first volume, under the name of Mr. Alexander Barclay, furnishes many examples. It is to treat a statement of their own party when cited against them, not as a quotation, but as a mere *ipse dixit* of the opponent who cites it; and then give it a bold contradiction; leaving the reader wholly unaware that it was grounded on authority they were bound by, or on any evidence at all. By this honest stratagem it is concealed

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* Vol. i. pp. 89—99, and Appendix thereto, No. IV.

from the readers of Mr. Barclay's work, that I had cited in proof of the propositions last referred to, such high colonial authorities as Sir William Young, Mr. Barham, Dr. Collins, Mr. Bryan Edwards, the petitions of the Jamaica Assembly, and the Act of the Legislature of all the Leeward Islands; though I not only cited them all, but used their very language, to shew the perennial prevalence of distress and ruin among the planters of the sugar colonies; and the sad effects of the master's debts and necessities on the subsistence of the slaves. My opponent has the superlative confidence to treat the proposition, that the slaves suffer in those very ordinary cases, as if it stood on my suggestion alone; next to oppose to it his own unsupported assertions: and then to rail at me for having advanced so groundless a charge.*

Having to deal with such antagonists, it is not easy for me to say what the limits of this controversy now are; what points may be taken as conceded, and what are still in dispute. According to all the colonial authorities cited in my former volume, and many more that I could add to them, I might fairly assume as an admitted fact, that the slaves of indigent and embarrassed planters are often "scanted in their main-"tenance," i. e. left ill-clothed, under-fed, and half-starved; and it seemed that, in respect of such cases, I had only to contend, as I did in my former volume, that the excuse derived from the master's necessities is, in its principle, unsound.

This I maintained, and still maintain; because it is unjust and inhuman to hold men in slavery, to work them hard, and take all the fruits of their labour, and yet leave them in want of food, in order that the master's debts may be paid, or the coercion of his mortgagees prevented; because, also, it is admitted, and quite undeniable, that the slaves could provide sufficiently for their own subsistence, if land enough and time enough were allowed to them for the purpose; and further, because the colonial legislatures might (as that of the Leeward

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* See my first volume of this work, pp. 89—100, and the Appendix, No. IV. and Mr. Barclay's "Examination" of it, pp. 70—74. Let any reader who doubts whether such fraudulent artifices as I have here ascribed to my opponents are really and systematically practised by them, fairly compare the two works in the places here referred to.

Islands did, though by a law obsolete in practice) make the expense of their maintenance a primary charge on the produce of their labours.

So I argued; and the arguments are to this hour unanswered. But now the colonists, by their new champion, discard their own former premises; and, instead of defending the once acknowledged case, or noticing the proofs of it that I cited against them, turn round on me, and stoutly deny that it has, or ever had, any existence. Let me again place one or two of the former admissions under the eyes of my readers, and with them these strange retractations. "Whereas (said the "preamble of the meliorating act of the Leeward Islands) *many "persons have often been prevented from supplying their slaves "with sufficient food and clothing, by the encumbered state of their "property; those plantations and slaves being sometimes charged "with mortgages or other incumbrances to so great an amount as "to leave no surplus &c. for the necessary subsistence of their "slaves; and merchants have been discouraged from selling pro-"visions or clothing to persons in doubtful or embarrassed circum-"stances, to the very great distress and danger of the slaves, and "also to the manifest prejudice of mortgagees or other creditors, "whose securities may, in very great measure, depend upon the "lives or good condition of such slaves."*

Many years later, and seven years after the abolition of the slave trade, the Council and Assembly of Antigua recognized in substance the continuance of the same case; stating as an excuse for the non-execution of a law, prescribing certain allowances of provisions for the plantation slaves (a default which they were driven by parliamentary investigations to admit), that "many proprietors, though very desirous of com-"plying with the provisions of the law, were *prevented from "so doing by the unavoidable difficulties under which they la-"boured,*" and "*that there were many planters who had it not "in their power to withhold any part of the produce of their "plantations from their creditors.*"†

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* See Vol. I. p. 92, and the Act itself, in papers, printed by order of the House of Commons, June 8, 1804, H 24.

† See Vol. I. p. 100, and Papers of July 12, 1815, p. 149.

And what said the assembly of *Jamaica;* an island which the authors of Barclay's Practical View delight to resort to for their asserted facts, treating a defence of its system, even in points confessedly peculiar to it, as a sufficient one for all the sugar colonies? "*It is to save our own labourers from* "*absolute want that we solicit the interposition of our Sovereign,*" &c. "*They will not be persuaded that their masters are innocent* "*of their miseries; and their rage and despair may involve our* "*country in anarchy and blood.*"—"*From the impossibility of* "*giving the usual comforts to their labourers, all are exposed to* "*the effects of convulsions,*" &c. "*It is enough for us to allude* "*to them, without opening up their horrors.*" Again, "*The pro-* "*prietor sickens at the additional labour of his people, while he is* "*unable to give them the usual remuneration of their toil.*"*

Such were some of the statements, such the painful confessions, of these legislative bodies, which I cited and relied on; and Dr. Collins was shewn to have confirmed them in a way the most impressive: for he laboured to convince his unfortunate brother planters, that it was their duty to surrender their estates to their creditors, when unable to feed their slaves sufficiently, rather than relieve themselves from their difficulties, or take the chance of doing so, *at the cost of* "*the blood of* "*their own species.*"

I certainly was of the same opinion; and thought moreover that it was a reproach to the colonial legislatures to have left open that "*horrid*" alternative, as Dr. Collins justly called it, by not compelling the planters, in whatever circumstances, to give a sufficient maintenance to their slaves, while working hard for their profit.

But we were all, it seems, dreaming of phantoms that had no real existence! for the colonists now assure us, by the pen of Mr. Alexander Barclay, that *slaves do not suffer at all in such circumstances, and from the nature of the case cannot pos-* "*sibly do so;*" that the mortgagees are the real proprietors, and would supply them if the master in possession could not; but that, in point of fact, planters, however "*miserably dis-*

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* Ibid. p. 90, 90, 91, and the original public document there referred to, being a petition from the Jamaica Assembly to the Prince Regent in 1811, &c.

*"tressed themselves," never do curtail the comforts of their slaves."** *"Quo teneam vultus, mutantem Protea nodo?"*— To argue with these opponents on their own ever-shifting premises, is like painting a camelion.

They are not content, however, I repeat, with the privilege of self-contradiction, even in its most glaring forms; but with matchless assurance, arraign of falsehood and defamation any antagonist who ventures to quote against them such former statements of themselves, their co-partizans, or employers. Shamelessly sinking the fact that such quotations were made, or any other authority adduced against them, they ascribe to his misrepresentation and malice the very statements and confessions he cites. The style in the passages here referred to, as in many other instances of these most disingenuous evasions, is, *"Mr. Stephen says," "Mr. Stephen himself acknow-"ledges,"* &c. and *how can the mortgages, as Mr. Stephen says,* "affect the slaves so seriously," &c. Nay, the practical remedies which I had suggested for the often-acknowledged mischief, though borrowed from the Act of the Leeward Islands itself, and recommended by me on the authority of that precedent, are characterised as *"new and dangerous schemes and "innovations, founded on ignorance and false assumptions, and "on fallacious theories, applied by enthusiasts in England to a "foreign community, of the state of which they are entirely ig-"norant."*†

If the indignation and disgust which colonial slavery, when truly pourtrayed, must excite in every liberal mind, were capable of augmentation, surely it would be found in these contemptible shifts, and fraudulent artifices, to which its apologists are driven.‡

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* Barclay's Practical View, &c. pp. 70—74. † Ibid. p. 72.

‡ Let it not be supposed that I have selected this as one of the strongest specimens to be found in this work of Mr. Barclay, though put forth and widely circulated by the colonial party, and boasted of by them as a satisfactory reply to my former volume. Let any man select at random from his 491 pages any one in which my former volume is referred to, and then collate the commentary with the text, and with its immediate context; and I will undertake to shew to him either some manifest suppression or mutilation of my statements or arguments, some gross perversion of their meaning, or at least some evasion or palpable sophistry in the reply affected to be given to me.

Leaving such replies to the understanding and feelings of my readers, and resting on the very authoritative and decisive

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By far the largest part of Mr. Barclay's Practical View, like the kindred work of Mr. M'Queen, relates to topics which I have declined the discussion of in this volume, for reasons already assigned; and I have no desire to exceed my proposed limits for the sake of replying more generally to such antagonists, who have virtually put themselves out of the lists, by violating every law of legitimate controversy. But among the noble and honourable planters resident here, who have made themselves responsible for Mr. B.'s work, by patronizing it, at least, and promoting its circulation, there are some, perhaps, who are more than by profession friendly to the *moral* and *religious* interests of their slaves; and who may think consequently that, when advocating these, at least, I ought not to have been unfairly treated. I will therefore depart from my general rule, so far as to ask whether they are prepared to approve and abide by such a disingenuous and evasive defence of their moral characters, in the relation of slave-owners, as is to be found in the following extracts.

In noticing a distinction between the West India slave laws, and our old English law of villeinage, the former regarding the mother's servile state as deciding that of the children, the latter the state only of the father, I had remarked that if the law of villeinage governed the case, the marriage of slaves would have been anxiously promoted, instead of being discouraged; because without it no title to the issue could, in right of the father, be made, and being illegitimate they would, by the law of villeinage, be free; whereas, by the colonial law, the issue of an unmarried black woman, though by a white man, are slaves, and belong to her master. I inferred, "that instead "of sending out and employing as managers, overseers, and book-keepers, "single men in the heat of youth, *and giving them a range of intercourse* "*among the female slaves, unrestrained by disfavour or reproach, and encou-* "*raged by general example, married men, or men of strict morals or decent* "*manners, at least, would have been preferred for such situations.*"—Delineation of Slavery, vol. i. p. 124.

Now what is Barclay's answer to this? Suppressing entirely the context, and leaving unnoticed the occasion of the stricture, he cites, with inverted commas, the first clause of the above passage, *omitting the words above printed in italics;* and says, "The planters, complains Mr. Stephen, send "out and employ as managers, overseers, and book-keepers, single men "in the heat of youth," as if that had been the only charge against them; and then asks, "Can the planters find married men to go out to the West "Indies with their families, or can the planters be reasonably required, from "apprehension of immoral practices, to give all their servants the means of "marrying and of supporting families? Do the masters in England, where "living is less expensive, act thus to their servants?" And there he leaves the defence of his honourable employers.

Had the quotation been fairly made, his readers would have seen that not

colonial testimonies here cited and referred to, I will assume as an established and well-admitted truth, that when the master is necessitated and embarrassed, i.e. on a large proportion of sugar estates, the slaves, though worked as hard or harder than ever, are often very insufficiently fed; or, to use the words of that eminent planter and colonial champion the late Sir William Young, "*the pressure of mortgages and personal need*" induce the planters "*to scant and overwork their slaves*:"* or the reader may substitute, if he pleases, the more explanatory concession of Mr. Braithwaite, late agent of Barbadoes:— "The allowance of corn to a negro must depend on the cir- "cumstances of his master. If the planter fails in his own "crop of corn, he must purchase. Should the price demanded "be more than he is able to pay, *his negroes must suffer.* To "a planter in debt there *may be a fatal difference to his negroes* "whether corn is at five, ten, or fifteen shillings per bushel; "as he may have credit for one hundred pounds, but not for "double or treble that sum."†

Now what man not inured to the practical system can think this a defensible part of it? The labourer who is constrained to work, and does work most arduously, for the benefit of a particular master, is doomed to suffer hunger, and in a degree

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the sending out young men, but the allowing them to exercise, without disfavour or reproach, their irresistible power of debauching the female slaves, to which their youth and single state must strongly dispose them, was the gist of the charge thus dexterously evaded; a charge made by almost every writer on one side of this controversy, and admitted by every writer on the other who has ventured to touch on the subject; being, in fact, too notorious for contradiction. But his readers then would have anticipated the reply, that his comparison with English masters is preposterous and insulting; that as the managers are not domestic servants, no family inconvenience, but the sordid economies alone of a sugar-plantation forbids their marrying; that no English landlord requires his steward or bailiff to live unmarried; and, above all, that such agents here, have no power of constraining, by the exercise of a despotic and tremendous power, the female peasants on the estate to gratify their libidinous desires. There are nevertheless few masters among us, I trust, who would suffer the seduction of their female servants by a bailiff or steward to pass uncensured or unpunished.

* Vol. I. p. 95.

† Privy Council Report, part iii. title Barbadoes, 2 A, No. 5.

that may be fatal to his frame, because that master is in debt, and because the whole marketable produce of the labour is paid over to his creditors. The slave is starved, to save the owner from a foreclosure or execution! If this be right, or if the legislators who permit it are guiltless, then the infamous Mrs. Brownrigg, who was hanged in this country for starving her apprentices, and another wretched female who recently suffered here for the same crime, were perhaps condemned very unjustly. Their excuse was probably not worse than that of the embarrassed planters who starve their slaves; unless necessitous circumstances deserve less allowance in a low station than in a high one.

This species of oppression is doubtless the most grievous, generally speaking, on deeply encumbered estates; but it is not with a view to such cases alone, numerous though they are, that I have adduced these well-established facts. They evince clearly, what many on this side of the Atlantic may find it hard to believe, notwithstanding the express testimony on the colonial side which I have cited, and have still to cite. They shew that, under some circumstances at least, British planters are capable of subjecting their hard-worked labourers to famine, and holding fast the chain of slavery, at the cost, to repeat the strong, but just language of Dr. Collins, "*of the* "*blood of their own species.*" It will therefore be the less difficult to believe, that under ordinary degrees of temptation, the same gentlemen have reduced the maintenance to a degree at which justice and humanity revolt. That this is the case, even under the most ordinary circumstances, I maintain, and undertake to prove.

Here the apologists of the system and their opponents have been very widely at variance. Their general propositions, at least, have been remote as the north and south poles from each other. On the one side, the maintenance has been alleged to be not only adequate, but liberal; on the other, to be in all points, comprising the vital one of provisions, opprobriously scanty and sordid. The one party, as we have seen, has excepted the case of indigent owners; the other not even the most affluent.

But wide though the controversy is, I trust to decide it to

the satisfaction of every impartial judgment, by the testimony of my opponents themselves.

My plan and means for doing so, will be, first, to overthrow the false case set up on the part of the colonies, by a comparison of the general and very laudatory accounts of some of their witnesses, with the less uncandid general accounts or admissions of others; and next, to shew and establish the true case, by a collocation of the specific statements and details given by the same and other witnesses and writers on the colonial side, as to the actual allowances of food and other necessaries, periodically given to plantation slaves by their masters.

Sufficient specimens of the general statements of my opponents are already before my readers.* I need only ask them to remember, that those laudatory testimonies applied as strongly to the maintenance of the slaves, our present subject, as to the degree of their ordinary labour, in which I have shewn them to have been extravagantly opposite to truth. I will not encumber my work with further citations to the same effect, though multitudes of them might easily be given; for what professed apology for slavery can we open, without finding boasts that the unfortunate subjects of that state are amply, and even superabundantly maintained? Many of those writers are not content to stand on the defensive on this point; but actually seem to rely on the alleged good feeding, and liberal maintenance in all respects, of these poor beings, as an adequate compensation for their harsh and perpetual bondage.

That, in respect of *food*, these pretences were in a great degree unfounded, and opposite to truth, has already been shewn. They were false, at least, in predicating of the slaves at large, that which could be true only of such whose masters either were not so poor and embarrassed as to be under a strong temptation to scant them; or had virtue enough to resist that temptation, by surrendering their estates to creditors, that their slaves might be sufficiently fed. How far the former description of planters is from being large enough to characterize the general case, I have enabled my readers to judge; and as to the latter, I am not aware of any specimen

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* See supra, p. 21 to 23.

of it that was ever known or alleged. But even if limited to the practice of wealthy or prosperous planters, those statements would confessedly require many and wide exceptions; for it is admitted, that from other causes than the master's poverty and want of credit, viz, from his parsimony, or from want of industry in the slaves themselves, (a pretext which I shall hereafter consider and repel,) these poor labourers are often scantily fed; aye, and to a degree destructive of their health and of their lives.

Dr. Adair, an experienced West India physician, and a witness brought forward before the Privy Council Committee by the agents of Antigua, assigned as one of the causes of mortality and decline of population among plantation slaves "*the scantiness, and sometimes the bad quality of their food;*" and added, for though "*industrious slaves* have generally so "many other resources as (independent of their weekly "allowance) to procure them not only the necessaries, but "(to them) the luxuries of life, yet it too frequently happens, "that in the distribution of provisions a proper distinction is "not made between them and *the indolent and thriftless,* so "*that the latter by their improvidence are rendered worthless,* "*and even noxious, by habits of depredation.*"

The Doctor added, "But *in barren soils, and during long* "*droughts,* when the grounds allotted to each slave are not "productive, *even the industrious slave may suffer;* when a "proper compensation is not made by an increase of the "weekly allowance, and by giving them food nutritive and "invigorating, in proportion to their labour. Though this "distress may *undoubtedly sometimes be owing to inattention,* "*or ill-judged parsimony, yet it more frequently proceeds from* "*real inability to apply an adequate remedy, from the scarcity,* "*or bad quality of imported provision.*"*

Here we have a clear, well-attested fact, with a very questionable, as well as imperfect excuse. The most industrious slave, i. e. he who adds to the enormous tale of daily work for the master, every possible further exertion for his own support, may, and often does suffer from hunger and inanition, and

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* Privy Council Report, title Antigua, No. 11.

consequent diseases; and this confessedly sometimes *through the cruel parsimony of the master.*

That want is often the lot of "*indolent* or *bad negroes, idlers,* or *vagrants,*" &c. (terms which always, in the plantation vocabulary, comprise those who are not hardy enough to endure all the severities of their state,) was virtually admitted by almost every witness, and by some of them in express terms. "*The good negroes,*" said Mr. Douglas, "*live in* "*plenty*; *the vagrants are often in want, and it is impossible to* "*prevent it.*"*

It is not, however, by these exceptions alone, important and comprehensive though they are, that the statements I refer to have been impeached. They have been already shewn to have been since totally abandoned and retracted by the colonists themselves; for they related to a time long antecedent to the abolition of the slave trade, subsequent to which, as we are now told, liberality, kindness, and attention to the preservation of the slaves, had their commencement.

Whether the now alleged improvements are less fictitious in respect of maintenance, than I have shewn them to be in the article of labour, remains to be seen. In neither point would there have been any need of, or any room for improvements, if the account with which Parliament was deluded in 1790 had been true. But it is with the actual former case, not the fabulous one, that we must compare the present, in order to ascertain whether any improvements have been really made; and it is important, in other views also, to shew in every branch of my subject, to what an extent the mother country was deceived by the colonists, as to the true nature of a system which she is alleged to have concurred in, and to be bound, at the expence of her purse and her conscience, to uphold.

I will not therefore be content with falsifying the general proposition, that the slaves were liberally and abundantly fed: I will shew in detail the shameful reverse; but will first oppose to it colonial testimony of a general kind, in reference to the time of that assertion, as well as to a later period.

No evidence to that purpose can be more impressive than the statements and remarks of Dr. Collins, written several

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* Commons' Report of 1790, p. 289.

years after the latest date of the parliamentary evidence. There is hardly a paragraph in his whole chapter on diet which I might not here use with advantage; and I regret that the whole is much too long for insertion: but I desire the reader's particular attention to the following extracts.

In reasoning anxiously to persuade his brother planters of the West Indies at large, to be more liberal in their allowances of food, he urges their own self-interest, in "the greater "labour which a well-fed negro is capable of executing, in "proportion to one who is half-starved, and in his exemption "from disease, and its possible consequence, death; for I "avow it boldly," he adds, "*melancholy experience having* "*given me occasion to make the remark, that a great number of* "*negroes have perished annually by diseases produced by inani-*"*tion.* To be convinced of this truth, let us trace the effect "of that system which assigned for a negro's weekly allow-"ance six or seven pints of flour or grain, with as many salt "herrings, *and it is in vain to conceal, what we all know to be* "*true, that in many of the islands they did not give more.*

"With so scanty a pittance, it is indeed possible for the soul "and body to be held together for a considerable portion of "time, provided a man's only business be to live, and his "spirits be husbanded with a frugal hand; but if motion "short of labour, much more labour itself, and that too in-"tense, be exacted from him, how is the body to support "itself? What is there to thicken and enrich the fluids— "what to strengthen the solids, to give energy to the heart, "and to invigorate its pulsations? Your negroes may crawl "about with feeble, emaciated frames; but they will never "possess, under such a regimen, that vigour of mind and tone "of muscles which the service of the plantation demands. "Their attempts to wield the hoe prove abortive; they shrink "from their toil; and, being urged to perseverance by stripes, "you are soon obliged to receive them into the hospital; "whence, unless your plan be speedily corrected, they depart "but to the grave.*

Is it an anti-slavery writer, an enemy to the colonies, (as my opponents call every advocate for the poor slaves,) that writes

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* Practical Rules, 87, 88.

thus? or is it a man ignorant of the system, and prejudiced against it? No; it is a very eminent long-experienced West India planter and physician, who had resided more than twenty years in the West Indies, and who, even in this work, was an apologist not only of slavery but the slave trade. He it is, who avows the horrible truth that great numbers, every year, of these wretched fellow-creatures, while working intensely for the profit of their masters, are, by their sordid and cruel parsimony, killed through inanition; i. e. slowly starved to death.

"It may possibly be urged in palliation of this practice, "(adds Dr. Collins) that in cases of such short allowance "as I have mentioned above, negroes do not depend upon "that solely for their subsistence; but that they derive con- "siderable aid from little vacant spots on the estate, which "they are allowed to cultivate on their own account. Though "frequently otherwise, this may sometimes be the case; yet "even there, it is to be observed that such spots in the low- "land plantations are capable of producing only for a part of "the year; either through the drought of the season or the "sterility of the soil; and when that happens, the negro is "again at his short allowance; and, having no honest means "of ekeing it out to make it square with the demands of "nature, he is compelled to pilfer. His first depredations are "directed to canes, which are nearest at hand, and abound "with a sweet and nutritious juice. For the purpose of con- "cealment he penetrates into the cane piece, &c. He next ex- "tends his ravages to substances more solid, and robs your "poultry yard, &c. Is there any thing extraordinary in all "this? Far from it; such conduct is perfectly natural, I was "going to say justifiable: yet when the delinquent is de- "tected and apprehended, he is severely whipped, and chain- "ed, and confined. But neither chains, nor stripes, nor con- "finement can extinguish hunger. The first moment of his "release he returns to the same practices, and, dreading a "similar punishment, on the apprehension of discovery, he "absconds into the canes, the woods, or among the negroes "of some distant plantation, where he remains concealed, "until being at length ferretted out by rewards and re-taken, "he undergoes a repetition of the same discipline, which co-

" operating with scanty nourishment, and with colds con-
" tracted by exposure to the weather during his desertion, it
" is ten to one but he falls into a distempered habit, which
" soon hurries him out of the world.

" Now this was set down as a vicious incorrigible subject,
" and his death is deemed a beneficial release to the estate:
" but if we consider the matter more closely, we shall see
" reason to suspect that the offences of this unfortunate slave
" did not arise so much from his natural bad disposition, as
" from the misery of his situation, and the misconduct of his
" master, who has in fact been his murderer, by withholding
" from him a subsistence equal to the demands of nature," &c.
" The truth is, being reduced to the alternative either of
" starving or stealing, he embraces the latter, only as the least
" evil of the two; and thus provides for his stomach at the
" expence of his posteriors. Some negroes, however, either
" of more timorous complexions, who out of respect to their
" skins hold a cart-whip in abhorrence, or who, having a
" greater faculty of fasting, resist better the impulses of ap-
" petite, struggle on with their short fare, until impoverished
" nature, manifesting itself in the shape of some visible dis-
" order, gives them a title to the sick-house, where they are
" indulged with all the facilities in the world to die."
(p. 90, 91.)

After such extracts, it may be thought that my undertaking to shew from authenticated details, what the ordinary maintenance specifically was and is, so far as respects provisions, might have been spared; but as the subject is of vast importance to the interests of humanity, and as a full explanation of the practice will throw much light on the sordid character of plantation economy in general, and expose the gross impostures that have been used in its defence, I must adhere to that part of my plan.

SECTION III.—*Different modes of feeding the slaves in different colonies.*

HERE I must remind my readers of a distinction formerly made between two different classes of sugar colonies, which

vary materially from each other in their ordinary modes of slave subsistence.

Upon most estates in Jamaica, and many in those windward islands which are sometimes called the new or ceded colonies, the slaves, for the most part, depend for their food on the produce of provision-grounds, allotted to them individually, and cultivated by each slave on his or her own account, on the Sunday, and at such other portions of daily or weekly time as may be left at their own disposal after the master's enormous demands for their labour in the cane pieces, and at the sugar works, are satisfied. But in the Leeward Islands, comprising Antigua, St. Christopher, Montserrat, Nevis, and Tortola,* the slaves are, generally speaking, and on many estates exclusively, fed by provisions imported or bought by the master, and served out to them in weekly rations; the cultivatable lands there being so fully occupied in cane planting, and so subject besides to long droughts, (which are destructive to native provisions, much more than to the hardy and succulent sugar cane) that there are either no sufficient allotments of land to spare for the slaves, or none that can be depended on for their support. The former, for brevity sake, I will call the *home-fed,* and the latter the *foreign-fed* colonies.

Barbadoes is of a middle character; the slaves being fed by rations from the master's stores, but chiefly on provisions grown on his account, and cultivated by the compulsory labour of the gang at large; and I understand the same to be the general practice in Demerara and Berbice.

It is further, however, necessary to premise, for the clearer apprehension of some of the evidence I have to adduce, that even in the foreign-fed colonies, we hear of the negroes' provision grounds, often dignified by the name of *gardens;* because on many upland plantations, there are ridges of land between the cane pieces and the wooded mountain-tops, too sterile and steep for sugar culture, or for any other purpose

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* Many estates, however, in *Tortola,* have provision-grounds that are allotted to the slaves for their support.

than allotments to the slaves for what are called mountain provision-grounds; and which, from their great altitude and the adjacency of the woods, are less subject to drought than the lands below. On the lowland estates also, there are commonly "*gut sides*," i. e. the steep borders of wash courses, and other broken bits of land unfit for cane-planting, which the slaves of course are allowed to make such use of as a few of them are able to do. There are also commonly a few square yards of vacant ground dividing the negro huts, which the occupiers may plant if they please; but which generally serve only for yards and passages between the huts. A calabash tree, from which the culinary and other vessels of the slaves are supplied, or some other tree, is sometimes seen there, and sometimes a few wild plantains or bananas, which, when intermixed with the huts, give the group a pretty appearance at a distance; but those arid little spots furnish in no degree, or a most minute one at best, any articles of food.

All these petty portions of soil collectively, where there are no mountain provision-grounds, are capable of contributing in so very trivial a degree to the support of the gang at large, and the attempts of the few individuals who endeavour to raise articles of food from them, are so often wholly frustrated by droughts, that in an estimate of the general means of subsistence, they may fairly be thrown out of the account. They have been so indeed by such laws of the Leeward Islands, as regulate the allowances of food by the masters; and even by the more candid of the colonial witnesses and writers. Nor are the mountain provision-grounds in those colonies a resource of much importance; except on a very few estates, where from local circumstances they are more accessible, and more productive than common. In general, they make such small returns of the inferior articles of food they yield, and cost such of the slaves as are able to cultivate them so much fatigue and detriment to their health, from exposure to the chill air and drizzling rains of the mountains, and from the temptation to eat their produce before it is ripe, that I have heard it disputed as a doubtful question between experienced planters in St. Christopher,

whether the possession of them is, on the whole, any advantage whatever to an estate.

For these general distinctions, like the rest, I subjoin some authorities; in pursuance of my ordinary plan to leave nothing that I state notorious, though its truth may be unproved.*

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* "Jamaica and some of the ceded islands feed their negroes at less "expence than the Leeward Islands, because they have great tracts of land "which are wholly devoted to raising provisions for their negroes, which is "not the case in the latter, where, in *general, the subsistence of the negroes* "*depends on articles of food imported.*" (Evidence of Mr. Spooner, agent for Grenada and St. Christopher. Privy Council Report, A. No. 7.)

"The estates in the old windward islands, are not, in general, of above "one half the extent they are in the ceded islands. They are of course "worse appointed in provision-grounds; and as the climate of these islands "is much more uncertain, *very little dependance can be placed on their sea-* "*sons; therefore it is not above one year in three that their provisions an-* "*swer.*" (Evidence of James Baillie, Esq. Commons' Report of 1790, p. 203.)

Privy Council Query, A. No. 5. "Are negro slaves fed at their master's "expence, or by their own labour? and when fed by their masters, with "what are they fed, and in what quantities?"

Extract of the Answer of the Council and Assembly of *Nevis*. "Negroes "are fed at the expence of the master. The articles of their food are flour, "pease, beans, oatmeal, Indian corn or Guinea corn, together with salt "provisions." N.B. None of these articles are raised in the island.

Extract of the Answer of the Council and Assembly of *Antigua*. "Negro "slaves are universally fed in this island, at their master's expence, with "Indian corn, beans, rice, flour, yams and potatoes, they have likewise a "number of salted herrings or salted fish, with a quantity of dried salt al-"lowed them."

The answers from *Montserrat* were nearly to the same effect. All these answers add, as will be presently shewn, the quantities of ordinary allowance by the master, and also mention the small pieces of ground or gardens allotted to the slaves, and their asserted power of adding to their subsistence by means of them, and by other voluntary labours; but it would be premature to cite in this place more than is necessary to shew the general dependance, in those islands, on imported food.

"In *Grenada* we gave no provisions to a healthy slave, (except herrings "or salt fish) without their own provision-grounds should fail them. Ne-"groes are fed differently on different islands. In Grenada, where the "estates are large and have a great deal of new ground, it has universally "been the custom to allot so much land to each negro, for himself, his "wife, and children, as was thought sufficient to maintain them." &c.

Section IV.—*Of the mode and measure of subsistence in the home-fed colonies.*

It is obvious that where the subsistence of the slaves is wholly or chiefly derived from the produce of provision grounds allotted to them individually, and cultivated by what may be called, though improperly, their voluntary labour, the actual ordinary quantity of their daily or weekly food cannot be clearly ascertained. It must depend on a variety of different circumstances; such as the extent and quality of the land allotted to them, its position in respect of proximity to, or remoteness from their huts, or the cane-pieces on which they work, the period of the year, and the kind of weather

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(Evidence of Alexander Campbell, Esq. Commons' Report of 1790, p. 141.)

But even in some of the *home-fed* colonies, the planters, either from a topical scarcity of provision grounds, or dislike to spare time enough for their culture, often take the feeding of their slaves on themselves; supplying them either with imported grain and flour, or with native provisions raised by other planters, or on their own estates upon the master's account.

"In *Barbadoes* (said Mr. Braithwaite, agent for that island,) they have "a constant allowance of food from their masters. Their food is Guinea "or Indian corn raised in the country, and ground, at their master's expence; "and ground provisions such as plantains, yams, potatoes. Besides this "they have maize, rice and salted provisions imported." (For the rest of his answer, see supra, p. 244.)

"The custom with respect to the feeding of slaves (said the Governor of "St. Vincent,) differs upon different estates. In general they are fed "partly by their own labour, and partly by the assistance of their mas- "ters," &c. (Evidence of Governor Seton of *St. Vincent*, Privy Council Report, St. Vincent Q. A. No. 5.) "Upon some plantations they are fed "almost entirely with ground provisions the produce of their own labour." (Ibid. A. No. 7.)

"The slaves are fed at the expence of the owners in general, except in "some cases where time is given to them *in lieu of food*, to work for them- "selves in cultivating the grounds furnished to them by their owners; "which creoles and other slaves, having been long in the country, usually "prefer. (Same Report, *Dominica*, Q. A. No. 5. Evidence of Messrs. Bruce, Gillon, and Fraser.)

that has preceded, as being favourable to vegetation or the reverse; and above all on the quantum of time allowed by the master, and what is called the industry of the slave, or more truly speaking, his capacity in point of bodily strength to work more or less on his provision ground, in addition to his forced labour under the drivers.

To find a medium quantity among all these diversities, of the food actually obtained in the home-fed colonies, is manifestly impossible. It would be so, even if the evidence I have restricted myself to had been candid and impartial; for a planter himself could hardly furnish the necessary data, even from his own particular estate. It is, therefore, chiefly in respect of the *foreign-fed* colonies, that I shall be able to establish, by clear and direct testimony, the ordinary scale of subsistence; and to shew from them its great inadequacy when the slave depends wholly or chiefly on rations served out to him by the master. There, also, the food is often of a kind the nutritive value of which we can in great measure estimate upon data familiar to my readers; whereas some species of the indigenous provisions which constitute the food of the slaves when raised by themselves, are known to us only by name.

I must be content, then, to prove, in respect of the *home-fed* colonies, from circumstantial evidence, and by inferences from acknowledged facts, that the subsistence is, at least very often, and in some comprehensive cases, greatly deficient; and to shew a high probability that its ordinary amount is much less than justice and humanity require.

This has already in some measure appeared from quotations I have given, especially from the authority of Dr. Collins in his truly valuable work;* for his strictures were not confined to the practices of the foreign-fed colonies; and St. Vincent, which was probably prominently in his view, because his property and long residence had been there, was one where home-feeding chiefly prevailed. The master's allowances or rations, which he describes as so scanty, were partially and occasionally in use in that island, as they were also in other

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* Supra, p. 258, 9, &c.

home-fed colonies; for many plantations in them, as we have seen, have no provision-grounds; and even in the most seasonable places, those grounds sometimes fail from droughts, hurricanes, and other causes.* If, therefore, I shall be able to shew that when the planter in such cases feeds his slaves wholly from allowances, his standard of sufficiency is not less scanty and sordid than that of the foreign-fed colonies, it will afford a fair inference that his allotments of provision-grounds, and of time for their culture are not regulated by more liberal feelings. It appears clearly, from Dr. C.'s advice and strictures as to feeding in general, that he included in his views colonies in which the home-feeding system was at least partially in use; and that in them the method of feeding by weekly rations was often preferred by the choice of the masters; for he takes pains to persuade them that the former is more beneficial to themselves; "When the estate from its "extent, or the quality of its soil or situation, will admit of "it, certain portions of ground should be allotted to the "negroes to plant with provisions, instead of giving them a "weekly allowance; and this is undoubtedly the best way "of providing for their wants if *they are duly superintended* "*in the culture of their grounds,*" &c. (p. 100.)

He explains how intimate and particular that superintendance ought to be; and adds, that without it "the provision "grounds will be found very much neglected, and the negroes "as much at a loss for provisions as if they had no ground "at all."

He holds it indispensably necessary in order to prevent this, that one afternoon in each week, besides the Sunday, should be set apart for the culture of the provision-grounds; and that the employment of it should not be trusted to the slaves themselves; but that immediately after the dinner hour

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* See the authorities quoted above, p. 263. "Hurricanes occasion such "a temporary scarcity of provisions as approaches nearly to a famine. In "the islands which have been visited with this scourge, every production "is swept from the face of vegetable nature, and that which the earth in "part conceals from its researches, is yet so much injured as to be capa-"ble of being preserved only for a very short time." (Collins, 114.)

and grass-throwing, the list being called, they should be accompanied to the grounds not only by the drivers, but the overseer, who should walk round all the allotments, directing his attention to each, and seeing every slave properly employed on his or her proper ground; and afterwards, by a second visit to each allotment, ascertain that proper use has been made of the time by each individual, and bestow praise or rebuke accordingly. After all, he admonishes the proprietor or chief manager, that he must not trust implicitly to the information or reports of the overseer; but must himself acquire a knowledge of the several allotments, and their respective owners, and visit them from time to time to ascertain the truth of the reports by the evidence of his own senses; for he adds, "that there is no part of the overseer's duty "that he is more apt to neglect than this; though nothing "can be more essential to the health and welfare of the "gang, who can no otherwise obtain an abundant supply of "provisions than by a diligent culture of their grounds." (p. 102, 3.)

Now, if we consider how very onerous these duties must be on the overseers and managers, we might have well inferred, without the express testimony of this experienced planter, that they are in general left unperformed; and the self-fed slaves consequently often exposed to a distressing scarcity of provisions.

Let it not, however, be supposed that all this laborious superintendance, and a right application, in consequence, of the weekly afternoon, would, in Dr. Collins's judgment, suffice. He plainly enough admits that Sabbath work must be superadded, though he felt it not right to recommend for that day the like means of coercion; for he adds, "*I say "nothing of Sunday: that being a day of rest or recreation, "they have a right to dispose of it as they think proper; but as "they cannot be more innocently or beneficially employed than "on their provision-grounds, every encouragement should be "held out to them to apply their time in that way, by slight "rewards or honorary distinctions, which, if conferred upon such "as comply with your wishes, may induce others to follow their "example.*" (p. 104, 5.)

Such precepts from an apologist of slavery, may surprise

those who have listened to the recent tales of the planters; but the day of religious hypocrisy was not then arrived; the policy of seducing from the cause of the poor negroes their natural allies, by persuading the pious part of the public that the interests of christianity might be reconciled with avaricious despotism and a brutalizing bondage, had not yet been adopted; and the systematic desecration of the Sabbath, even by compulsory means, was therefore freely avowed.*

Doctor Collins was so far from representing that an afternoon weekly, however well employed, would suffice without Sabbath work in addition, to keep the slaves from want, that he recommended the giving the half day in the middle of the week, instead of the Saturday (on which day it is always given when at all) for the provision-grounds; in *order that the slaves might have two weekly periods at a convenient distance from each other for bringing home the produce on their return.*†

Religion is one of the topics that I have left to other pens: but Sabbath-breaking has an inseparable connection with this subject of subsistence from the provision-grounds; for if Sunday now, as my opponents have the face to assert, is "*strictly a day of rest,*"‡ how can those grounds be cultivated, and their produce brought home, so as to yield an adequate support?

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* "Besides this, (i. e. besides compelling the slaves to work on their "grounds on the Saturday afternoon) it was the universal custom on a Sun- "day morning at about nine o'clock, for the manager or overseer to go "over the grounds, call out the lists, and see who were in their grounds; "as it was generally the orders of the owner or manager for the negroes "to go to their grounds." (Evidence of that very eminent planter and zealous defender of the system, the late Mr. Campbell of Grenada, Commons' Report of 1790, p. 142.) The same witness being asked, (p. 179,) "Are they *compelled to labour* at their own grounds?" answered, "*Yes.*"

† "One afternoon of every week, exclusive of Sunday, must be allowed "for the cultivation of their grounds. I should prefer Wednesday or "Thursday to any other for that purpose; because, being in the middle of "the week, it enables your negroes when returning from their labour to "bring home as many provisions as will serve them until Sunday, and on "Sunday they may stock themselves until the middle of the week, which, "where the grounds are remote from the negro houses, is no small advan- "tage." (Collins, p. 104.)

‡ Barclay's Introduction, p. 23.

If, when Dr. Collins wrote, and Mr. Campbell and others testified, a *day and a half weekly* were necessary for their cultivation, how has half a day weekly, or one day in every fortnight, which the last and now subsisting Jamaica act prescribes,* become sufficient for the purpose? Unless the grounds, like the clouds when dropping manna on the Israelites, yield more plentifully in favor of the Sabbath, its newly acquired rest, must, if real, have reduced sufficiency to one third of enough.

That there has been such a reduction, I am indeed far from believing; but it is only because I believe, or rather certainly know, that these new pretences are wholly false. The poor field-negroes work as hard on that day as ever; because, as some of their religious instructors have truly stated the case, "*they must either profane the Sabbath or starve.*"

It is clear, at least upon the authorities here cited, that the Sabbath rest must be surrendered, and *incessant* labour consequently submitted to, or the subsistence, where the slaves are self-fed, must fall short. Now that the latter alternative will be often hazarded, and actually incurred, by the weaker slaves at least, of both sexes, after such severe continuous labour for six days as I have shewn to be exacted from them, will hardly be doubted. Even the laborious walk to and from the provision-grounds must, in many cases, suffice to deter the poor slave from going to them, and make him or her truant to the Sunday task. In Jamaica they are very commonly distant several miles from the homestall, and on hills of steep ascent. Mr. de la Beche notices that his own were on a mountain at a distance of ten miles.†

Prudent therefore, (however harsh and profane) is that practice which Mr. Campbell stated to be universal in Grenada; the

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* Act of December 1816, sect. 4.

† Notes, &c. p. 9. See also Beckford's Account of Jamaica, vol. ii. p. 152, "If their grounds be at a considerable distance from the planta-"tion, as they often are, to the amount of five or seven miles or more, the "journey backwards and forwards, makes this rather a day of labour and "fatiguè, than of enjoyment and rest."

sending them on Sundays to their work on the provision-grounds *under the overseers and drivers;* but that it was not very common elsewhere was asserted by other witnesses;* and we may indeed infer from Dr. Collins's advice that it was at least not universal when he wrote. It is probably less so now, from the effect of that new policy to which I have adverted.

That to many, at least, of the slaves in the home-fed colonies, the provision-grounds at all times yield at best but a precarious and insufficient support, is clearly deducible from that valuable body of evidence to which I have so often referred, the examinations before the House of Commons and the Privy Council, the only public evidence we have that enters into any particular account of the system; for when the planters spoke of the abundance of food derived from the provision-grounds, they commonly qualified it by the exceptions not only of drought and hurricanes, but also of slaves that were "*bad, worthless, idle, or ill-*"*disposed,*" terms the import of "which Dr. Collins has well taught us how to understand. It is the "*industrious*" slaves only we are told that never suffer want, except when the master's necessities, or droughts, or hurricanes are the causes.†

The plain English is, that those only whose moral and physical constitutions are patient and hardy enough to endure incessant labour, may, where the provision-grounds are abundant and seasonable, have a sufficiency of food.

The Dutch formerly had a method of treating vagrants and other offenders against the police more ingenious than is our tread-mill discipline. The man was put into a bath, in which the water reached his chin, and a stream was con-

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* See Mr. Tobin's evidence Com. Report of 1790, p. 277.

† "Coercion," said Mr. Tobin (where last cited) "is unnecessary to in-"duce *an industrious well-disposed negro* to turn such grounds to the best "advantage."

See also Mr. Douglas, as before quoted. The good negroes live in plenty; the *vagrants* "are often in want; and it is impossible to prevent it."

"The situation of slaves *who are industrious,* (said Sir Ashton Byam) is "comfortable and happy." (Ibid. 115.) And he excepts (p. 105) as to the sufficiency of the provision-grounds, "*worthless and idle negroes, which* "*are probably to be found in all gangs of slaves.*"

stantly adding to it. He had a pump handle put into his grasp, by the incessant working of which he could pump out as much water as flowed in; but not much more. He had to choose therefore, between hard work and drowning. The situation of the self-feeding slave, when not *driven* to his provision-grounds on the Sabbath, is much the same; except that want, not drowning, is the consequence of his inaction; and that, as it is a consequence not so immediate, foresight as well as industry is necessary for his preservation.

If it be asked whether, upon these views, I regard the subsistence in the home-fed colonies, as on the whole more inadequate than in those of the other description, I answer, No. On the contrary, I believe, that in the former, generally speaking, the slaves are less scantily fed; and that the abler part of them often have a sufficiency of vegetable food in point of quantity, though in quality, for the most part, ill adapted to the support of hardworking men; whereas the quantity also is grossly inadequate where the slaves depend wholly on the masters' allowances; as I shall decisively prove when I proceed to delineate the practice in the foreign-fed islands.

In *Jamaica,* I believe, the case to be for the most part, much better than in any of our other sugar colonies. It is not because the planters are more liberal; for in clothing and other necessaries, their slaves are not a whit better provided, as I shall show, than those of other islands; nor is their slavery, in other respects, more lenient either in practice or in law; but there is, in most districts of that island, a much greater quantity than elsewhere of seasonable land fit for the growth of provisions, and unemployed in the culture of canes; so that few of the planters there comparatively, are under any great temptation to stint their slaves improperly in the quantity of their allotments, or to assign them in a barren soil; though they often lie at an oppressive distance from the home stall. The best provision-grounds, however, will not suffice to prevent want, unless time and strength enough are allowed for their cultivation. And though it is obvious that where the means of culture are the same, the better the lands, the larger, *cæteris paribus,* is likely to be the supply, I see not how the weaklier slaves in Jamaica, or in colonial language, the less industrious, can be exempted from often suffering

under a scarcity of food; though in a less degree, perhaps, than those in other colonies. That they suffer generally and severely, when their masters are in embarrassed circumstances, we have seen to be fully admitted by the Jamaica assembly itself; and the cause presumedly is, that planters, when forced to push their cane culture to the uttermost, for the relief of their own necessities, allow a less proportion of time to their slaves for raising their own provisions.

One writer, the Rev. Mr. Bickell, who is well worthy of confidence on these subjects, has distinguished the case of this island so widely from the rest, as to admit that, though the quantity of the food is very bad, *much, generally speaking cannot be objected to the quantity of it.* The concession, of course, has been eagerly cited by the colonists; and with their usual unfairness. Suppressing the words "*generally speaking,*" and the context, that "the *time allowed them for raising their pro-* "*visions is not by any means sufficient,*" which shows that the general case, especially with the more weakly slaves, was, in the writer's contemplation, subject to very numerous exceptions; they triumphantly exclaim, "*and so the negroes* "*have a sufficient quantity of food.*" They add, "*and savoury* "*food,*" because the same writer had elsewhere spoken, of their pots of boiled vegetables seasoned with a small portion of salt fish, as being savoury, though he had at the same time described the ordinary food of the slaves to be such "*as an English pauper* "*would reject, and think hardly fit for human and rational* "*beings.*" Having thus fairly dealt with his authority, they say, "*this we should hope will be glad news to Mr. Stephen.**

I must admit that there is one fortunate peculiarity in Jamaica, if we may take the fact on such authority as Barclay's, which may make the case of the more feeble slaves not so distressful there, as in other home-fed colonies; for it is stated that "calaloo or wild spinage grows as a weed in "the cane-fields; and that a certain yam grows wild in the "fields that have been thrown out of cultivation and it is

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* See and compare Barclay's Practical View, p. 439, with the Rev. Mr. Bickell's West Indies as they are, p. 10, 11. 56, 57.

"added that from November till April these are the princi-
"pal dependence of such indolent improvident creatures as
"will do nothing for themselves." I must dissent indeed, from the encomiums contained in the same work on yams as pleasant food, or fit to be compared with the potatoes of Irish labourers, for the sustentation of hard working men; especially in reference to the *wild yams* here spoken of, which Mr. Bickell's condemnation of by the name of "*negro yams*," most strictly applies to. It is, I am well informed, to use his expression, "hoggish food," having a harsh stringy texture, far exceeding that of the worst cultivated yams, with much less of their nutritious substance. I nevertheless, confess that these, or even wild spinage, may allay the fierce cravings of hunger; and consequently that the lot of the *indolent and improvident*, in plain English, the *feeble and over-worked* slaves, may not be quite so bad in Jamaica, as in places where such resources, or the uncultivated cane pieces which produce them, are not to be found. But we have here an incautious avowal that even in Jamaica those slaves whose provision grounds from what is called indolence or improvidence, do not yield them the means of subsistence, find no resource in allowances from their *provident* masters; but are left to depend for their food on such supplies as the casual bounty of nature may afford; and that for five or six months in the year. This is certainly "*no news*," still less "*good news*, to Mr. Stephen."

Whatever advantages the slaves in Jamaica, or in other home-fed colonies, may have in comparison with those which depend on imported provisions, there is one admitted counterpoise, in the occasional famines to which long droughts and hurricanes expose them.

Six successive hurricanes in Jamaica within eight years, had according to the statement of its agent and planters before the committee of Privy Council, been destructive by *partial famine and disease*, of "*many thousands of negro slaves.*"* Mr. *Hibbert* estimated the loss at 15,000,† and many other

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* Privy Council Report, title Jamaica, Q. A. No. 30.

† Commons Report of 1790, p. 396.

witnesses ascribed to the same species of calamity the decline or non-increase of the black population, chiefly through the consequent devastation of the provision grounds.

"It is hardly possible (said *Mr. Gregg*) for the planter to "provide against the dreadful effects of famine; and I should "not be surprised in case of a hurricane happening in the "ensuing season, to hear of some dreadful catastrophe simi- "lar to that which lately happened in Jamaica and Antigua, "by which *twenty-three thousand* slaves perished."

These probably were much exaggerated statements; for their objects were to shew the necessity of the slave trade, and of opening a direct commercial intercourse with the North American States. But Dr. Collins also, as we have seen, (supra p. 266.) notices the calamitous effects of hurricanes in general as an occasional cause of "scarcity, and approaching nearly "to a famine, producing consequences fatal to the slaves." He differed, however, so far from Mr. Gregg, as to hold the guarding against them by the planter to be not only possible but easy.†

That similar effects are produced by long droughts, has before been noticed and proved. On the whole, it may be affirmed, that though in the home-fed colonies, the slaves' subsistence is commonly the least scanty, it is at the same time the most subject to occasional and particular failure; and that feeding by rations from the master's stores, being the more certain and equable, is the best for those who require most support, the feebler part of the gang.

That indigenous food should be raised when possible, I admit, and on humane as well as economical views; for such sustenance is likely to be less sparingly given in

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* Ibid. 234.

† "A prudent man ought never to be without a resource adapted to "the emergency, which should be provided at the approach of the hur- "ricane season. Nothing is better for that purpose than the Indian corn "of America; because if wanted it will afford a good food for the ne- "groes; and if not wanted for them it may be given instead of oats to "the horses and mules, of which a great quantity would otherwise be "consumed; so that no loss whatever can possibly ensue from the salutary "precaution." (p. 114.)

ordinary cases, than that which the master has to buy; but there can be no good reason for leaving the supply of it to the care of the slave himself; and it is a flagrant inconsistency in those who tax the negroes with indolence and improvidence, to commit to their own prudence and voluntary exertions, the vital interest of their subsistence.

If I am asked, "what then should be done?" I answer, Native provisions for their support should be raised by the common labour of the gang on the master's account, as is the practice in Barbadoes; and meted out in adequate weekly rations from his stores; though land might at the same time be allotted to those whose voluntary industry might be employed upon it, to the improvement of their own condition. Such, I doubt not, would be the general system in the home-fed colonies, if it had not been found inconvenient, or thought indecorous, to *drive* the slaves on the Sabbath; and a better mode, therefore, of exacting seven days of labour weekly, to obtain the first, through their urgent sense of their own necessities, by leaving to each individual the task of raising his own food on that day.

We are frequently told that half a day's labour in a week, or the amount of a week's labour in a year, will suffice to furnish the slaves with an abundance of food. I quoted my West India opponents to that effect in my former volume, when arguing with them upon their own premises, in aggravation of the injustice and cruelty of leaving their slaves to suffer hunger and famine, when their owners were needy and embarrassed, merely because land and time were avariciously withheld from them. Those propositions are now cited against me, in various places, by Mr. Barclay, as if they had been originally mine, and advanced on my own authority. It is true that I gave them more credit and countenance than they deserved; but expressly because I found what seemed to me a satisfactory confirmation of those estimates of my opponents in a State Paper published by President Boyer at Hayti, in which half an hour's daily labour was said to suffice there for a week's subsistence. I now believe that I had mistaken the President's meaning. He was comparing, not the specific produce of agricultural industry with the time employed in

raising it; but the high price of human labour in that country, with the general cheapness of food there.* If I had been controverting an opponent's premises, such a mistake would have been less venial; but I had a right to argue *ex concessis*, without very carefully if at all considering whether the adopted proposition was correct.

The quantity of labour requisite to produce a given quantity of food must obviously be widely different in Hayti, where the cane lands, proverbially once the most productive of any in the West Indies, are now applicable to that purpose, from what it is in the old British colonies, where the cane plant ingrosses all the soil rich enough to produce sugar to advantage. I was, therefore, wrong, even on my own former view of the authority, in supposing that the Haytian estimate tended to support that which I borrowed from my opponents, which I now believe to have been as deceptious as their statements usually are.

Indeed, they practically show their own sense of its extreme inadequacy; for if half a day weekly will suffice, and if they give that time, as they generally pretend they do on Saturday, then what becomes of all the excuses for suffering and recommending, not to say enforcing, the working in the provision grounds on the Sabbath? and how comes it that advocates for humane improvements, like Dr. Collins, recommend the systematic encouragement of that practice as essential to the well-being of the unfortunate drudges themselves? It is also, let us remember, admitted that the daily respite of two hours at noon is often applied by the poor wearied drudges to what on the estimate in question, would be a needless purpose.

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* The words, as quoted in my former volume, p. 90., were "*L'homme qui "travaille une demi heure par jour, obtient un subsistance, pendant une semaine.*" I cannot now find the paper referred to; but think the words "*pendant une semaine,*" would have been improper and unintelligible, if the specific produce of the labour, as I supposed, had been in view. Indeed, in that island where much of the vegetable food in use is of spontaneous and perennial growth, the ratio between the labour and the specific produce, could hardly be any subject of estimate.

The fact is, that my opponents grossly exaggerated, in the estimates referred to, the productive power of labour, even when employed on the best soil ever allotted to the slaves, and when aided by seasonable weather. At the same time they forgot their own exceptions of droughts, hurricanes, and periods of the year in which the provision grounds are very scantily if at all productive.

But it is high time I should proceed to the next division of my subject; and shew more clearly what is the actual quantum of food, and what the colonial standard of sufficiency, by ascertaining its amount, when dealt out by the master himself in articles that he has imported or bought.

SECTION 5. — *Of the subsistence in foreign-fed colonies, in respect of its ordinary nature and amount.*

Here it will much assist the reader in rightly comprehending and weighing the evidence which I have to adduce, to shew him, first, upon what specific points the parties to the abolition controversy were originally at issue on this subject; and how far they agreed in their statements.

For this purpose I cannot do better than to cite, on the one hand, *Mr. Ramsay's Essay*; and on the other hand Mr. Tobin's "*Cursory Remarks*" on that work; for these, as before observed, may be considered as the original pleadings, or allegations of the contending parties, when they first appeared at the public bar in this country as accusers and defenders of colonial slavery, on the question of abolishing the slave trade.

In the present division of my subject, their statements are of the more importance, because both Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tobin had long resided in the foreign-fed colonies of St. Christopher and Nevis, to which, in consequence, their accounts had a special reference; and both went into details as to the ordinary allowances of food in those islands; more especially in the former, where the pre-eminent and then undiminished fertility of the cane-lands had made the feeding with imported grain far more exclusive, and dependence on

the master's rations more absolute, than in any other part of the West Indies.

If it were true, as my opponents commonly maintain, that whatever enhances the present profits of the planter, promotes also the comfort and welfare of his slaves, the subsistence given at that period in St. Christopher, would form far too favourable a specimen of the general case; for the pre-eminent value of the sugar of that island is notorious; and so fertile then was its soil, that some estates were known to produce from three to four hogsheads, of a ton weight, for every acre they planted; nay, one or two plantations, near the town of Basseterre, were generally said to have yielded, in a good season, five such hogsheads per acre. But as I am far from admitting, either that the slave is in general benefited by the master's wealth, or that his wealth can be with certainty inferred from the productiveness of his crops, I desire only that the selection of St. Christopher, the colony with which I am best acquainted, may not be thought unfair towards the foreign-fed colonies at large.

I could wish to extract all that Mr. Ramsay said on the subject of feeding; for it is highly impressive; but it will suffice for the only use I desire to make of his work, to quote merely the details he gave as to the ordinary weekly *allowances from the master*. He stated, "that they varied on "different plantations, from one to three pounds of grain, "under the *nominal* measure of from two to eight pints; "that a few plantations went near to five pounds, and one or "two as far as six; and that the slaves always received from "three to eight herrings a week."* But he alleged instances of parsimony much below this general scale of subsistence, cruelly inadequate though it must be seen to be.

Mr. Tobin, in his reply, said, "I shall not differ greatly "from Mr. Ramsay, when I assure my readers that the general "allowance, on a tolerably well regulated plantation, is as "follows, viz. *out of crop time* from six to nine pints of flour, "oatmeal, rice, pease, &c., and from six to eight salted Scotch "herrings, for a week, to each slave above the age of a suck-

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* Ramsay's Essays, p. 79. 80.

" ling infant. During grinding season, which lasts from four " to five months, this allowance is perhaps reduced to from " four to six pints of flour, &c., and to from four to six her- " rings." He added, " exclusive of this regular allowance, " it is customary, on most plantations, to give each negro at " breakfast time, during the rainy time of the year, a ship " biscuit, with a draught of molasses and water, which is dis- " tributed in the field. This breakfast allowance is in general " extended to the negro children through the whole year. I " will, however, drop for the present," he added, " all extra " indulgences, *and suppose the average allowance of each slave " through the whole year, to be, weekly, six pints of flour, &c., " and six herrings.*"*

This, Mr. Tobin proceeded to maintain, proved the slaves to be as well fed as our British labourers; a proposition at which my readers will doubtless be much surprised; and which shall hereafter receive the attention it well deserves. Meantime an explanatory remark or two may be wanted on Mr. T.'s premises; which, though he regarded them as nearly concurring with those of his opponent, seem to differ from them not a little. If *pints* were to be taken as equivalent to *pounds*, it is manifest that the *medium* of Mr. Tobin was the *maximum* of Mr. Ramsay; whose larger allowances, besides, were ascribed to only one or two plantations; whereas Mr. Tobin spoke of all " *tolerably well regulated*" ones. The latter, however, guarded himself by a note, as follows:—" In speaking of re- " gulation, allowances, &c. I wish them to be understood as " adopted by *such estates as have fallen under my own imme- " diate inspection.* In a few, perhaps, the treatment of the " slaves may not have been so liberal; and in others, I have " not the vanity to doubt but they may have been much " more so."

This disclaimer of *vanity* seems to shew that by *inspection* we must understand *direction*, either as owner or attorney; and the doubtful terms as to other estates, plainly import that the author disavowed any certain knowledge of their allowances. If, then, we suppose, that in speaking of " tolerably

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* Cursory Remarks, p. 58-9.

well regulated plantations," he had in his view the standard of feeding on those of which he was the owner or attorney, the apparent difficulty of understanding him is lessened, or removed. Mr. Ramsay's maximum may have been the true medium of allowances on those estates; and the difference may have been chiefly in their different views as to the comparative numbers of those "well regulated plantations," and others of an opposite character. The alleged approximation and great apparent difference of the two accounts may, however, partly have arisen from the various terms of quantity employed; for though Mr. Ramsay had given the amount of the allowances both by weight and measure, his opponent, saying nothing as to weight, resorted to the pint measure only. The former also had spoken of the pints as *nominal* ones, with a meaning well known at the time *, and clearly had in view such as were greatly below the standard pint of this country, and had no uniform dimensions. This appears from his general, though indefinite proportions, between the numbers of pints and pounds; for though he stated both as varying on different estates, we find those proportions in general given by him as nearly two pints to one pound; whereas a pint of flour weighs only about fourteen ounces. Mr. Tobin neither repelled nor noticed the imputation of false measurement; and yet, strangely enough, chose to give his quantities by the impeached pint measure alone, avoiding the criterion of weight altogether. Nevertheless, he soon after tacitly assumed, in his comparison of these allowances with the subsistence of English labourers, that the pint of flour, or even of unground Indian corn or beans, is equal to a pound of the former; though if so, the plantation pint must, instead of falling short of the English standard, exceed it by one seventh part at the least. It would follow also, on that assumption, that the difference between the two accounts, instead of being small, was nearly as two to one.

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* It was one among the charges against the planters on this head, that to conceal in some degree the extreme scantiness of the allowances, many of them reduced the wooden measure of this denomination to much less than an actual pint.

But as it is not incumbent on me to vindicate the consistency of a writer whom I quote only as an opponent, let it be supposed that his statement was, in effect, widely different from Mr. Ramsay's; and let it be further supposed, if my readers please, that Mr. Ramsay's fell much below, and that Mr. Tobin's did not at all exceed, the true ordinary rates of subsistence. The question then will be, whether six pints, or seven at the most, of whole Indian corn, or even of wheaten flour, and about as many salt herrings per week, are enough for the subsistence of a hard-working man?

We have seen already Dr. Collins's opinion on that point. His decisive authority, if it did not confirm the account of Mr. Tobin, showed that it was at least sufficiently favorable to the planters. "It is vain to conceal what we all know to be "true, that in many of the islands they did not give more "than six or seven pints of flour or grain, with as many her-"rings, for a negro's weekly allowance;" and he was so far from thinking, like Mr. Tobin, this rate of subsistence to be sufficient, that he treated the allowance as a scanty pittance, such as may indeed possibly suffice "*to hold soul and body* "*together*" for a considerable time, with men "*whose only* "*business is to live;*" but so inadequate to sustain them under hard labour, that he expressly ascribes to its scantiness the shocking mortality of which he had long been a melancholy witness. "*I aver it boldly, that a great number of negroes* "*have perished annually by diseases, produced by inanition.*"*

Authority, perhaps, will be thought superfluous to prove that such must be the effect of restricting hard-working men in an exhausting climate, or any climate on earth, to fourteen ounces or less of vegetable food per diem, even were it the most nutritive and best prepared food of that description; whereas we have seen that six or seven pints weekly of unground Indian corn or horse beans, the nutritious part of which must weigh much less than an equal measure of flour, are very often the subjects of this scanty allowance. I believe they are much the more common.

The salt herrings can hardly be at all taken into the account

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* Practical Rules, p. 87. cited more fully supra, p. 258.

as nutritious food; nor are they considered as such by the planters themselves. Several of them admitted, that the herrings serve merely to give a flavour or seasoning to their vegetable diet, when boiled into a mess, or, in the Creole phrase, *a pot*. "As to the animal part of their food, (says "Dr. Collins) the portion is small indeed, consisting of salt "fish or herrings. Though a great deal of nourishment can- "not be expected to reside in either of them, yet as they are "much coveted by negroes, and impart a relish to their vege- "tables, they cannot be dispensed with." He, therefore, in that view alone, "as the only good purpose they answered," recommended the continuance of their use, only in the then ordinary quantities; and was of opinion, that there should be no increase of them; while he earnestly advised the planters to adopt a more generous supply in the other articles of food.* In fact, the herrings, in the state in which they are very commonly imported, and still more when progressively served out, often, many months after their arrival, are little better than a mass of fœtid matter, containing as little nutriment as the brine in which they lie; but the negroes are fond of them, and the more, I believe, from that strong, and to European organs, offensive flavour, to which use has given a zest. They are desired chiefly, no doubt on account of the salt, with which they are so fully impregnated, that it forms no small part of their substance. Some travellers in Africa tell us that this article is there in high request, and sells in the interior for an extravagant price; and the powerful craving of human appetite for salt, has been noticed by several writers as an instinctive propensity, implanted in us on account of the great usefulness of that article in the digestive process, and its tendency to the preservation of health. I doubt much whether the same quantity of salt in a pure state would be less nutritive than the herrings; but perhaps it would not be much cheaper to the master; and probably not so acceptable to the slaves.

Though it may reasonably be assumed, that Mr. Tobin's account, confirmed by the long subsequent one of Dr. Collins,

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* Practical Rules, p. 115.

was at least sufficiently favorable to the planters at large, several of them, when called as witnesses in their own cause, stated the ordinary allowances of grain or flour at a considerably higher rate; but on a fair review of their evidence, the most credible general result will be found to be, that the average of six or seven pints and as many herrings weekly, was rather above than below the actual practice. A comparison, even of the most authoritative statements, those of the Colonial Assemblies and their public agents, variant and discordant though they were, will lead to the same conclusion.*

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* See the examinations on this subject in reports of the Privy Council and Parliamentary Committees on the Slave Trade. The standing Q. A. No. 5. in the former, as to the allowances of food in different colonies; was answered not only by their public agents here, but by many of the Governors, Councils, and Assemblies, whose written answers were prepared in the West Indies, and transmitted officially to the Secretary of State.

"The quantity distributed is different upon different estates; *I believe* "*in none less than a pint a day and a herring* TO SEASON THEIR POTS WITH, "which is given *to every man, woman, and child, on the estate, except in-* "*fants; and many of them have double allowances; such as millwrights,* "*masons, carpenters, boilers,*" &c. (Extract from answer of Mr. Spooner, *agent for St. Christopher.*)

"The quantity of food given to them varies in different plantations," &c.

"It runs in general *from four to nine pints per week,* given to *every negro* "*except infants,* whose mothers have an additional allowance for them from "their birth, equal to one half of their own. Every negro also has from "four to eight salted herrings, mackerel, or shads per week."—Extract from answer of the Council and Assembly of *St. Christopher.*

"The quantity of grain to each negro is *from eight to twelve pints;* and "of yams and potatoes, from twenty-five to thirty per week."—Extract from answer of the Council and Assembly of *Antigua.*

"Their allowance consists of from *four to eight pints per week of grain,* "*and from four to eight herrings furnished by the master.*"—Extract from answer of the Council and Assembly of *Montserrat.*

"The negroes are fed at the expence of their master. The articles of "their food are flour, pease, rice, oatmeal, Indian corn, or Guinea corn, "together with salt provisions. In the crop-time the quantity allowed them "varies from *four to six pints of the above mentioned provisions, and six* "*British herrings, or other salt provisions equivalent thereto, per week.*— "They have likewise an unbounded licence of drinking what quantity of raw "cane liquor they please, and two pints of boiled cane liquor are generally "given to each negro per diem; but out of the crop-time the quantity "allowed them varies from *eight to nine pints of the above provisions*

It will not, I presume, be doubted, that those public bodies and officers, in their statements to the privy council, and parliamentary committees, made the best case that could plausibly be set up by them, on this very interesting subject. Their object was to avert the abolition of the slave-trade; and for that purpose they had to repel the charge that the alleged necessity of importing new negroes in order to maintain the labouring population, arose mainly from their over-working and under-feeding their slaves. They were also speaking in defence of their own individual conduct, as well as the credit of their fellow-colonists at large: all the misrepresentations therefore, in such evidence, and all its deceptious views and colourings, must, in reason, be looked for on the defensive side.

It is equally reasonable, in reviewing the evidence of self-interested witnesses who differ in their accounts, to regard the statements least favourable to the common self-interest, as approaching nearest to the truth. Another observation to which such testimony is liable, will, I am sure, be felt to be of great weight, by those who are professionally accustomed to the examination of evidence for the establishment of controverted facts: there is a wise and equitable principle which pervades our law of evidence, that of estimating proofs, with

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"*per week, with the quantity of salt provisions before mentioned,* together "with a certain daily allowance of toddy and a ship biscuit for break-"fast."—Answer to the same query of the Council and Assembly of *Nevis.*

It is in respect of the above four islands alone that I find any specification of the quantities of imported food by those legislative bodies.

As, to consult brevity, I have not extracted the entire answers, except in the case of Nevis, it is proper to notice that the other respondents in like manner took credit for the cane juice and liquor in crop-time; and most of them also, for what the slaves, as they alleged, might earn by their own labour, on the spots of ground allotted to them; nor did they in general forget, occasional distributions of grog or toddy during hard work, or some extra allowances of salt provisions in the Christmas holidays. These paltry *make weights,* have been or shall be sufficiently noticed. The allowances may fairly be said, in a general view, to have constituted the entire subsistence; for on estates where it was in any degree aided by the advantage, very rare in those islands, of provision-ground allotments, worthy of being at all taken into account, the allowances were proportionally less.

reference to the power of proving, which the party adducing them must possess, supposing his allegations to be true. Hence the well-known practical rule, of distrusting, and in many cases absolutely rejecting, a degree of evidence otherwise sufficient, when the party offering it has better evidence in his power, which he does not produce.

Now if Mr. Ramsay's account of the ordinary allowances had been untrue, or if the statements of those witnesses or writers who represented the rations of imported food as materially larger, had been correct, the one might have been refuted, and the other established beyond dispute, by the production of books and papers to be found in every West-India counting-house: such as the invoices of stores shipped here for the use of particular estates, and the accounts or abstracts transmitted by the managers or attornies to the proprietors in this country, from which the amount of American or other provisions purchased on the spot would have appeared. Indeed, the former alone would at that time have most commonly sufficed; for flour or grain, as well as all the other supplies, were then chiefly imported from Europe. To have shewn, even in respect of a few estates, that their annual supplies of flour or grain, when compared with their numbers of slaves, amounted to a given rate of subsistence per head, would have been far more satisfactory than the loose parol estimates given by individual planters, some of which carried the allowances materially above the accounts that I have cited.

The agents and the West Indian Committee would of course have been readily supplied with such documentary evidence, had it suited their purpose to call for it; and the individual proprietors who were brought forward to attest their own liberality in feeding their slaves, might have brought their invoices and plantation accounts in their hands to support their statements, if true.

My recent antagonist, Mr. BARCLAY, has noticed the existence of such evidence in this country; and has strangely enough affected to suppose that it is within the reach of anti-slavery writers, or of the public at large. "Of this *truth*," he says, viz. that planters, "*however distressed, never curtail the* "*comforts of their slaves;*"—(an assertion, be it remembered, in which he is at direct variance with every man of his

own party who has ever written or spoken on the subject,) "it is in the power of any one who wishes to satisfy himself, "by calling on any respectable West India house in London, "and comparing the quantity of clothing, salt provisions, rice, "flour, medicines, &c. furnished in prosperous times and the "present.*"

How a man, wishing to pry into such circumstances upon anti-slavery principles, would be received by those "respect-"able West India houses," I leave the reader to guess:—but that all the evidence their counting-houses could supply would have been at the command of the West India Committee, for the support of the colonial petitions in Parliament, will not be doubted. Nor can we think so ill of the professional talents of the eminent counsel and solicitors by whom the case of the petitioners was conducted, as to believe that those sources of evidence were overlooked, while the long agitated question of subsistence was depending. But "facts "are stubborn things," and written proofs, forgery apart, intractable ones. Such evidence, therefore, could not have been safely and usefully invoked.

In one instance, abolitionists had access to a document, being a public one, by which the parol evidence of their opponents, on this very subject of imported food, was put to the test; and the result is very impressive. It had been stated before the Committee of Privy Council by the agent of Jamaica and other gentlemen of that island, that "the common "allowance of herrings there for the food of their slaves, was "from twenty to twenty-five barrels per annum, for every "hundred negroes, allages included;" but it was found, from official accounts of imports afterwards called for and appended to the report, that the average quantity of herrings imported into Jamaica during the five next preceding years, viz. from 1783 to 1787 inclusive, was only 21,089 barrels; which, supposing even the plantation slaves to be the only consumers, amounted, according to their then numbers, to less than half the quantity of the alleged consumption. Taking into account the very large use of that article of

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* P. 11, 12.

import by the poorer whites, the free coloured people and domestic slaves, the statement was probably excessive by two-thirds at the least.*

To this line of argument I shall have occasion to recur when I speak of the amount of *clothing*, all the articles of which are still imported from this country: though it is untrue that the same is now the case with flour, or other vegetable food, as Mr. Barclay insinuates. But the colonial party have other means of supplying in all respects this remarkable defect in their evidence by documentary proofs, as to the time present as well as the past; and till they do so, their parol evidence, even were it more consistent, would weigh little in reflecting minds.

What argument, however, can be more impressive than Dr. Collins's too tardy discovery of the real case, in his public appeal to the consciences of his brother planters. "*It "is in vain to conceal what we all know to be true,*" &c.—Yes, they "all *knew this to be true*:" yet they all long stood as petitioners before the Privy Council and Parliament, averring and producing witnesses to prove that their slaves were sufficiently, nay liberally and superabundantly fed; and all concurred in crying down before the British public, as libellers and liars, those who had humanity and courage enough

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* See Mr. Wilberforce's letter to his constituents of Yorkshire, 1807; where these public documents are cited and discussed.

Vain attempts were made in reply by the Jamaica Assembly to bolster up this refuted falsehood, on the pretence that a large quantity, not included in the official returns, had been imported from America; but it was shown in my second letter to Mr. Wilberforce in defence of his Slave Registration Bill in 1816, that the subsidiary statement, like the primary one, was unfounded in truth.

Gladly, no doubt, would the Assembly on that occasion have supported its own credit if possible, by adducing in its elaborate Report such written evidence as was abundantly at hand. To have shewn from official documents, e. g. the recorded accounts of receivers or trustees, or even from plantation books, or accounts current with consignees, that herrings had been supplied in the alleged proportion, even on a few estates, would have countenanced the impeached statement; and might have resolved detected imposture into venial mistake, as to the ordinary average supply. But no such evidence was adduced; and it is not hard to divine the cause.

to affirm the contrary. And yet the same men expect again to be believed, when upon the same kind of evidence they renew the same impostures. What better grounds have we now for believing that the slaves, at this moment, are sufficiently fed, or that they are not still suffering the same terrible consequences of inanition and hunger, that were so impressively described by Dr. Collins? If improvements, and adequate improvements, in this respect have taken place, where and when were they made?

Subsequent writers on the colonial side have prudently shunned the only fields in which they could be closely grappled with in this branch of the controversy. They have observed a discreet silence as to the amount of such improvements, and the actual scale of subsistence, in the foreign-fed colonies, where alone it can be ascertained, and where only we have public evidence to refer to in respect of its former amount. They affect to defend the planters at large, without limitation of place, against the charge of under-feeding their slaves; but all their alleged facts, and all their reasonings, relate to Jamaica, or other home-fed colonies. I am not aware, at least, that any one apologist of the system, since the abolition of the slave trade, has ventured to tell us what the allowances from the master are in the Leeward islands, to which in that respect the former evidence almost exclusively applied.

This omission is the more observable, especially in those who have professed to answer my former volume, because the strictures on this important subject contained in it, as incidental to my review of the slave laws, had special reference to the Leeward islands, and none at all to the case of the home-fed colonies; except by way of contrast with the liberal sustentation at the Bahamas, where sugar was no longer grown.*

I there shewed the insufficiency of food under which the slaves suffered, and often perished, in five of our sugar colonies at least, from authority not to be questioned; that of their own interior legislatures, convened in a general council and as-

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* See Vol. I. p. 98 to 100, and Appendix thereto, No. 3, p. 464 to 468.

semhly of all the leeward islands at St. Christopher in 1798, for the purpose of amending their slave laws; and also the inadequacy and failure of the enactments then made to remedy the acknowledged mischief.

As that volume, now long out of print, will probably not be in the possession of many who may read the present, I subjoin the rates of allowance prescribed and expressly recognised as humane and liberal ones, by an act of that legislative body. They were either "*nine pints of corn or beans* "*per week, or eight pints of pease, or wheat or rye flour, or In-*"*dian corn meal, or nine pints of oatmeal, or seven pints of rice,* "*or eight pounds of biscuit.*" Certain weights of native provisions, not as additions, but further alternatives, were also prescribed; and with them, or with either of these rations, one pound and a quarter of herrings, shads, mackarel, or other salted provisions, per week *; and the act allowed a reduction of one-fifth part of these scanty allowances in crop-time; i. e. during five months of the twelve.

We have here, therefore, a standard of what was deemed "*humane or liberal*" feeding in those islands, and held out as creditable to their meliorating code, ten years later than the period which the witnesses whom I have cited referred to. I may truly say, indeed, sixteen years later; for this act was laid before Parliament in 1804, as being amongst the best and most recent fruits of his Majesty's recommendations to the assemblies, pursuant to an address of Parliament of 1797, to pass protecting slave laws; nor am I aware, that in any one of those islands the standard has been raised by any subsequent law. In St. Christopher the same scale of allowances was expressly re-enacted only three years ago.

As I shall have more use to make of this act in the present division of my work, it is proper to apprize my readers of a peculiarity attending its enactments in respect of food, which

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* See the act printed with other colonial information as to meliorating laws, by order of the House of Commons, of 8th of June, 1801, title Leeward Islands, 15 H:

distinguishes it very materially from most other parts of the meliorating codes of the Leeward Islands, as well as of the other sugar colonies. In those enactments, its authors, or at least a respectable majority of them, were in earnest, and wished to be obeyed.

The general object, indeed, of these, as of the other colonial legislators, was to avert the abolition of the slave trade, by what the West India Committee, and the agents here, had anxiously recommended to them as the only possible means; the passing such laws as might, through their popular effect in this country, paralyze the efforts of the abolitionists, by producing a hope that slavery might be effectually mitigated and terminated, without the abolition of the trade, or any other parliamentary measures.* But the oppression of scanty feeding had at that time been carried to a more than ordinary degree of severity by many planters in those islands, especially in St. Christopher, whose half-famished slaves had become, in consequence, nuisances to their neighbours, by breaking their canes for food, and other depredations. It was, therefore, and I hope also from better motives, the sincere desire of the more respectable members of the general council and assembly to fix a minimum of the weekly allowances, on as large a scale, and with regulations as effectual, as could be proposed with any hope of general concurrence. But they met with an opposition so formidable, that they were obliged, in some measure, to give way to it; and the scale of subsistence ultimately enacted, shamefully low though it is, was not carried without great difficulty. I have in my possession a printed

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* See the resolutions of the committee, and the letters of Sir William Young inclosing them, in papers printed by order of the House of Commons of June 8th, 1804. H. 58, 59.

The General Assembly of the Leeward Islands were so far from disguising their motives, that they thought it an essential preliminary to have a copy of the resolutions of the West India Committee, then called "the Com-"mittee of Planters and Merchants" in this country; and Sir William Young's letter transmitting the same, officially laid before them; and they accordingly addressed the governor for that purpose, before they proceeded to business; as if on purpose to show that they meant to act merely in conformity to the advice of their partizans in England. See the same papers, H. p. 38.

report of their deliberations, published at the time on the spot, whereby it appears that there were many obstinate divisions, upon motions, to reduce, by a weekly pint or two, the scanty allowances at last adopted.

Hence alone, as I doubt not, arises the peculiar usefulness of this act, in throwing light on the actual practice. Had its purposes been wholly ostensible and illusory, like the ordinary enactments of the meliorating laws, we should most probably have found the prescribed allowances two-fold more liberal or specious.

There was naturally, however, no objection on either side, to take all the credit before the English public that could, without cost, be obtained; and therefore the preamble recited the object to be "to compel all persons to treat their slaves "*with that humanity which is generally prevalent in these* "*islands.*" No more can be necessary to satisfy every mind, that the enactments were not less liberal than the best existing practice.

But scanty though those statutable allowances are, I stated, in my former volume, that they had not in fact been given; and that the act had proved a dead letter, like the other meliorating laws. I cited, in proof of it, the authority of Mr. Caines, an eminent planter of St. Christopher, who, some years after, had the humanity and courage, though resident in that island, to publish a pamphlet there, stating that fact, and remonstrating with his brother planters on the subject. I cited further, an express admission of the Council and Assembly of Antigua, in 1815, that the prescribed allowances had not been given, and offering as an excuse for it, the poverty of the planters; and I added what was, if possible, still more decisive, that the provisions of the act for securing its own execution, by public returns on oath from the different plantations, had, as appeared by the answers to official enquiries made in pursuance of a parliamentary address, been every where, and universally neglected, from the first promulgation of the act, without a single prosecution for any such default.

These statements being undenied and unanswered by my opponents, I may surely now assume, as incontrovertible, that in the Leeward Islands at least, the general allowances

to the slaves are still less than their own laws prescribe; and if so they are probably not larger than those which Dr. Collins so strongly reprobated as cruelly and destructively scanty, viz., six or seven pints per week; for if we deduct the fifth part during five months of crop-time, from the prescribed weekly rations of nine pints, the annual average of the legal allowances will not exceed eight.

It is by no means necessary, however, that I should insist on any such inferiority in the practical to the legal standard; for what European reader can contemplate the latter, without compassionate and indignant emotions? With the nutritive powers, as human food, of some of the alternative articles, we are, indeed, happily unacquainted in this country; but the legislature of the Leeward Islands having considered its weekly rations of unground corn and horse beans as equivalent to eight pints of flour, or eight pounds of biscuit, (i. e. the hard and heavy ship biscuit in use by the most economical mariners, for none other is ever given to the slaves,) we are furnished with an unexceptionable medium, whereby to estimate the rest. The allowances, in whatever form, are only equal to eight pints of flour, or eight pounds of ship-biscuit weekly; and this is the whole subsistence of hard-working men, with the addition only of one pound and a quarter of salt herring, which, as we have seen to be admitted, has no nutritious value, but is used as seasoning only.

I shall hereafter compare this miserably inadequate subsistence with the ordinary consumption of food by English agricultural labourers; and also with the allowances of food to persons who are sustained here at public expense; and the result will be found demonstrative of the cruel parsimony of sugar planters, in a degree far beyond what most of my readers may be prepared to expect. In the meantime it may be right to remind those who have read my former volume, that the allowances prescribed by law in the Bahamas, where the curse of sugar planting has ceased with the capacity of the soil to sustain it, were shown to be in comparison with those of the Leeward Islands in the proportion of near two to one.

It is but fair to admit, in this place, that the advice of Dr. Collins did not extend to so large an increase of the ordinary allowances, as I shall maintain that humanity clearly required, nor quite so large as the Bahama legislature has prescribed.

"*When your negroes are fed with an allowance, and have that "only to depend upon, you ought not to give less than ten or "twelve pints a week to each grown negro.*"*

But it is impossible, I think, to read his work throughout without ascribing this very abstemious exhortation to his ordinary policy of prescribing no more costly correctives of the existing system than such as he hoped his brother planters might be persuaded, for their own interest, to adopt. He well knew, that, compared with the general practice, ten or twelve pints per week would be a very important attainment for the slave; and he knew also, full well, how hard it would be to reconcile the additional expence attending any such improvement with that rigid economy in the management of a sugar estate, which necessity dictates to most planters, and avarice strongly suggests to them all. The slave trade, it should be observed, in his further excuse, was then still in existence, and seemed to have finally triumphed over its opponents. Dr. C. therefore evidently calculated upon its continuance, for which he had been, and seems still to have been, an advocate. His advice, consequently, was adapted to a state of things in which the preservation of the slaves was not an object of any clearly demonstrative necessity, and he did not hope that very costly sacrifices for the attainment of it could be recommended with any hope of effect.

Whether this defence, or rather this explanation, of his views be satisfactory or not, the increase of subsistence that he advised was clearly inadequate to the demands of justice and humanity; though full large enough to condemn, on his authority, the still subsisting legal standard, and still more the actual practice, in the Leeward Islands. In proof of this I will now add, however needlessly, to the practical legislative estimate of the Bahamas, that of Jamaica.

In the last consolidated slave act of that island, section 69, a regulation is made for the subsistence of slaves while confined as criminals in the workhouses or gaols. The keepers are commanded, under a penalty of ten pounds for every neglect, " to provide and give to every slave *a sufficient quan-*

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* Practical Rules, p. 92.

" *tity of good and wholesome provisions daily, that is to say,* " not less than one quart of unground Guinea or Indian corn, " three pints of the flour or meal of either, or three pints of " wheat flour," (or substitutes needless to specify in native vegetables) " and also one herring or shad, or other salted " provisions equal thereto."* Comparing like articles with like, we have here quantities from two-fold to three-fold greater than the allowances of the Leeward Islands; and greater by one-third, at least on a medium, than those recommended by Dr. Collins, the herrings or other seasonings of the vegetable diet excepted, which are the same in all.

Did the Jamaica legislature, in giving these at the public expence, expressly as " *sufficient quantities*" of food, intend a large superfluity, as a bounty to criminals? or do men require thrice as much food in prison, as when they are working hard in the cane-pieces through the day?

Before I dismiss this subject of subsistence in the foreign-fed colonies, it may be proper to notice the resources which " *industrious*" negroes were said even there to possess, for adding to their means of subsistence, by cultivating those mountain provision-grounds which belong to some estates, and those small spots of broken ground which are unavoidably left to them, even in the fully planted and dry weather Leeward Islands; and also by their gathering grass and brushwood for sale in the markets.

Though Mr. Tobin, in his reply to Ramsay, did not scruple to maintain that the master's allowances, supposing them to be no more than six pints of flour and six herrings weekly, were enough for the slave's support, and ventured to compare them in a way I shall hereafter remark upon, with the subsistence of English labourers,† he afterwards, when examined as a witness before the Committee of the House of Commons, seems to have thought it expedient, like others, to take these alleged resources of voluntary industry into the account.‡

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* See the act in papers printed by order of the House of Commons, of June 10, 1818.

† Cursory Remarks 59, 60.

‡ Commons Report of 1790, p. 236. Q. " Is the quantity of food allowed to the negroes sufficient for " their support?" A. " The quantity of

Mr. *Thomas*, of Nevis, made the same *make-weight* means a part of his estimate.

Q. "Is the food allowed to the negroes, in your judgment, "proper and sufficient for their support? A. "No doubt "the food is proper; and with regard to the *quantity*, I must "say that it is a bare sufficiency for their support; but it is, "at the same time to be understood, that no master depends "wholly on that allowance which he weekly gives out, nor "does the negro rely upon it, as he has many advantages if "industrious and well disposed." *

It would be far better, I believe, for the poor slaves in the foreign-fed colonies collectively, if these "*many advantages* "*of the industrious and well disposed*" had no existence. The benefit of them, such as they are, belongs to a very few, compared with the whole number of slaves; and those few are commonly the individuals who have the least need of them, viz. the drivers and the other head negroes, or tradesmen; for these generally if not always, I believe, receive double allowances*, though they have by far the lightest labours. Yet, in the controversial use of these alleged "*advantages*," they are usually magnified beyond all rational bounds, and treated as if they were, or might be, enjoyed by the whole mass of the plantation slaves. They have served often to veil the true extent of the general oppression in respect of food, from the eyes of the British people; and from those also, perhaps, of many proprietors resident in this country, who have no personal knowledge of the case.

What are these "*advantages?*" — Mr. Thomas, like almost every other colonist who has condescended to specify them, referred to the "produce of the slave's own allotment of pro-"vision ground, his power of selling it in the markets, of "raising hogs, goats, and poultry;" (he might, in reference

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"provisions allowed to the negroes may be sufficient for their support: but "it is always understood, both by the master and the slave, that they are not "to depend entirely on the provisions allowed them, but are expected to "add something to them by their own industry."

* Commons Report of 1790, p. 250.

to *ordinary field negroes*, as fairly have added horses and cows,) and added, that " negroes *who live on estates adjacent* " *to towns*, have further advantages, derived from selling grass " and fuel to the inhabitants."

In the latter particular he spoke more accurately and fairly than most gentlemen of his party, for they in general would lead their European readers to believe, that not this very limited decription only, but all the slaves, even in the largest colonies, have markets within reach, at which all the grass and fuel they can collect, as well as the ground provisions they may have to spare, and the live stock they may raise, can always be sold. This species of delusion has probably derived much countenance from the hasty conclusions and reports of gentlemen who, on visiting the islands, have seen many negroes bringing to town such articles for sale, or standing with them in the markets, without the means of knowing that they were the slaves only of neighbouring estates, or on whose account they sold; and without, perhaps, reflecting how very small the amount of such traffic must be, and how trivial the number engaged in it, when compared with that of the whole black population. A few further facts, and a little plain reasoning, therefore, on this subject, may be useful.

In the first place, as, with the exceptions of grass or fodder, and fuel, all these marketable articles must be derived from the slaves' labours, at times allotted to himself, and on his own allotment of provision ground, it is clear that where he has not time and strength enough for such labours, or where he has no productive provision ground allotted to him, these alleged advantages, except as above, can have no existence, be his disposition to industry what it may. Now it has been already shown, that supposing a surplus of time and strength beyond what are appropriated to the master's use, to be left to the slaves for these commercial purposes of their own (which the readers of my chapter on labour, will I trust be satisfied cannot be the case, except with negroes of more than ordinary vigour), the allotments of provision grounds in the old Leeward Islands are neither large enough, nor seasonable and accessible enough, nor fertile enough, to form any considerable basis for these advantages, or even for the most

part to furnish the slave with any material addition to the food so scantily supplied by the master.*

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* In addition to the evidence already cited, the following may be worth extracting. "*Many of the estates,*" said the same witness last cited, "*have* "*no mountain ground at all;* in consequence of which the proprietor gives a "greater allowance of food." Q. "Can you say what is the greatest "allowance given where there is no mountain ground?" A. "The allow- "ance out of crop-time is greater than during the crop-season; but I believe "eleven pints of grain per week, besides an equal number of herrings, is "the greatest allowance."—Evidence of Mr. Thomas. Commons Report of 1790, p. 258.

The same witness being asked "are the islands of St. Christopher and "Nevis liable to frequent or severe droughts,"—answered, "They are "very much so; and I believe suffered much from this cause during the "last two years; for during the whole eight months that I was last abroad, "there fell but twice any thing of rain that might be called a hard shower." Ibid. p. 255.

It is obviously impossible to form any general estimate of the deductions that should be made from the resource of the provision grounds where any such are allotted, on account of these frequent droughts, both terms being quite indefinite; but that no material increase of allowance is commonly given on this account is manifest, since neither this nor any other witness distinguished it, or took it into account, even when stating the maximum of allowance without any limitation of seasons. As Mr. Thomas stated eleven pints to be the greatest allowance when there are no provision grounds at all, being an increase upon his own estimate of only two ninth parts at most, it may be confidently assumed that the increase, on account of occasional droughts must, if any, be very small indeed.

But the act of the Leeward Islands is more decisive on this point; for it allows no diminution of the prescribed rations in any islands under the government on account of the much magnified advantages in question, on estates near the towns; nor, except in the Virgin Islands, on account of the provision grounds, however productive; unless when they are "*under culti-* "*vation in the owner's time,*" i. e. when they are cultivated by the gang on the master's account, at times that would otherwise be employed in sugar planting. As to the Virgin Islands, where alone in that government provision grounds allotted to the slaves for their own use, are on many estates seasonable, and considerable in point of extent, the act allows expressly on that account, a diminution of imported or dry provisions out of crop, "in "the proportion only of one fifth part," and that only on condition that the owner "shall give and allow to each slave as much land and time, as shall "with his labour thereon for such time, be likely to produce the value of "the dry or salted provisions deducted." A proviso also is added in respect of the same excepted islands, that if the value shall not be actually

But I would, in the next place, and more particularly, call the attention of my readers to the grossness of those impostures which represent these poor drudges *in general*, as deriving from their sales in the markets, any adequate or material addition to the master's supplies. This resource, if some of the colonial fabulists were believed, furnishes them with an abundance of the comforts of life, and even its luxurious superfluities. They grow rich even, we are gravely told, if industrious, from this profitable marketing!!

Supposing the commodities in a great degree attainable in the foreign-fed, or even in the home-fed colonies, — where are the markets for 80,000 negro chapmen in Barbadoes, 20,000 in St. Christopher, and 330,000 in Jamaica? and whence come the buyers?

Jamaica, as we learn from Mr. Bryan Edwards, is one hundred and fifty miles in length, by forty miles of medium breadth, giving an area of 3750 square miles, intersected by high mountains; and it contains, by the same authority, eight towns, being about one to 469 square miles. If the towns were equally distributed over the whole area, and each

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produced, the difference shall be made good to the slave. (See sect. 2. p. 16. of the Papers before referred to.) If in the most favoured spots of the foreign-fed colonies, and under the most successful culture of the provision-grounds, they supply only one-fifth of the necessary food, it was not without reason that they were in ordinary circumstances thrown out of the account.

The same act more directly shews the insignificancy of the ordinary allotments of provision-grounds in many, or most parts of the government; for it enacts, that "Owners shall allot to every slave capable of working the "same, a piece or spot of good well-laying land of *forty feet square at least*, "immediately round or close to his house, if *the same can be done without pull-*"*ing down or injuring any other negro house;* and if it cannot be so done, "then shall allot the same quantity of land in some part of the plantation "commodious for his working the same, *provided there is so much land not* "*usually planted in canes;* and if not, an annual compensation of equal "value." (Same Act, sect. 6.)

Negro houses are usually placed in the driest parts of the estate. Let the reader then add to these views the frequent droughts destructive of all vegetation, except that of the hardy sugar-cane; and Mr. Baillie's admission that "provision grounds do not answer in those islands more than one year "in three;" and he will be able to estimate the value of this boasted resource of industry, which is the necessary basis of all the rest, excepting only the trivial supply of a neighbouring town with firewood and grass.

town centrical to its respective district, (the reverse of which may be seen by inspecting any map of the island, for the towns are all upon, or very near the coast) still it must be manifest that a very small proportion only of the estates could be so near to any town, as to make it possible for the slaves to walk to it with their merchandize, and return, even on the Sabbath, supposing also the whole of that day to be at their own disposal for the purpose.

I will follow the same author in some other statistics of a more changeful kind, not knowing that they are to be found in the work of any more recent opponent.

Mr. Edwards has furnished us with the numbers of houses contained in five of the eight towns he mentions; apparently not thinking the remaining three worth the same notice. Port Royal he stated to contain about two hundred houses; Savannah-la-Mar, from sixty to seventy; Montego Bay, two hundred and twenty-five; Falmouth, including two adjoining villages, two hundred and twenty; and Kingston, the chief town, the importance of which he extols, 1665. If they were all cast together, they would not exceed in extent many a market-town in this country.

But let us next look at his account of their free population. That of Kingston alone was given by him, and he stated it to be 6539 whites, and 3280 free coloured people.

If we suppose the other towns, the houses in which are given, to have been peopled in an equal proportion to the buildings, we shall have about 14,017 free inhabitants of towns of all ages; with a small surplus for the three other towns, whose houses are not numbered. Let the whole be taken at 15,000, and every man, woman, and child among them supposed to be a customer at the Sunday markets; then taking the slaves, as they were estimated at the same period, by the same authority, only at 250,000, we shall have, instead of many buyers to support a single chapman, near seventeen chapmen to serve a single weekly buyer.

If we look at the statistics of other colonies, as furnished in the same volume, the case will be found no better. Every where the free inhabitants of the towns are too few to make their common demand for articles sold in the negro-markets exceed the supply from adjacent or neighbouring estates;

though the superior or abler slaves of those estates, are, generally speaking, the only sellers, except a few from more distant parts on Sundays.

To regard this marketing, therefore, as a resource important to the whole mass of plantation slaves throughout the respective colonies, would be to adopt a very gross delusion.

The articles brought to town by the slaves for sale on their own account, are chiefly, and except on Sundays, exclusively, grass, fodder, and brushwood for fuel; all of which their necessities commonly oblige them to sell at prices oppressively low. A large bundle of either, laboriously collected and carried on the head to town at nightfall, after the toils of the day, will produce perhaps to the weary bearer, less than three-pence sterling.

As to the vegetables and fruit, fowls or other live stock, that are seen on sale by negroes, either in their market-place or elsewhere, on any other day of the week than Sunday, it may be with certainty concluded that the goods belong to the masters; and are sold on their account.

The following extract, from the evidence of Sir Ashton Warner Byam, may serve sufficiently to confirm these remarks. Q. "How are persons residing in the towns of the "different islands, and who have no plantations, supplied "with grass, fodder, and vegetables?" A. "The slaves of "the *neighbouring* plantations bring grass and fodder every "evening after their hours of work, to the towns for sale, for "their own benefit; and vegetables are brought by the slaves "to market on Sundays, for their own benefit; but on the "other days we purchase vegetables from the slaves, sent in "by the proprietors of gardens, to be sold for their master's "benefit."* It may be added, that no small number of negroes, who are seen as sellers, even in the Sunday markets, are notoriously the agents of their managers or overseers; and a still larger proportion are selling for the drivers, and other head negroes, of the estates from which they come.

But to recur to the impracticable distance of the markets, that undenied, and undeniable obstacle to their use by a great proportion of the slaves in every colony.

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* Commons' Report of 1790, p. 106.

No witness, and no writer, to my knowledge, has pretended that this circumstance is taken into account, so as to increase the allowances of slaves where the market is remote. Sir John Orde, indeed, Governor of Dominica, in his evidence before the Privy Council, noticed that such a difference was just. "In an island," he says, "where some have not a foot "of land to spare near their estates, and others the greatest "quantity; where some are near a market, and others can "scarce possibly get at one, it would be hard, perhaps, to "oblige all owners to give the same food to their slaves,"* Certainly, if enough was given, where there was no ground or market, there might have been some diminution where there was a concurrence of both. But I have shewn the insufficiency of the ordinary allowances, except when aided by these "advantages," to have been admitted; and yet it was not pretended that the ordinary rations were increased in the absence of them. One or two witnesses only alleged a small increase, when provision grounds were wanting, or unproductive; but not one of the many, who defined those rations, asserted that they were greater on estates distant from a market. The act of the Leeward Islands too which allows for the one, is quite silent as the other; and it allows for provision grounds, in the way only of diminution, from the prescribed subsistence where they are, not by any addition where they are not, possessed. It is a pregnant proof of how little these boasted marketing advantages were in the minds of those who could estimate them best, that the vicinage of a town was not at all taken into account in framing such a law.

The fact is, that the colonists, throughout the whole of this painful controversy, have practised that species of unfairness, which they impute without reason to their opponents. They accuse us perpetually of raising an unjust prejudice against them, by citing particular instances of cruelties, which, as they allege, are very rare. Our answer, to which no sound reply has ever been given, is, that our means of proving them only, not the facts themselves are rare, and that considering the systematical exclusion of all the natural evidence of such facts, and all fair means of their public investigation, the

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* Privy Council Report, title Dominica, Q. A. 5.

proof of a few, makes in a high degree probable the existence of very many.

They, on the other hand, never fail to generalize every alleviation of slavery that circumstances, however partial or particular, may produce. If a few drivers or tradesmen acquire a little property, it is brought forward as a proof, that the field negroes in general possess, or may by industry acquire it; if an odious character is under peculiar circumstances, and for some atrocious cruelty towards his slaves, brought to justice, they blazon it as a proof that protecting slave laws in general are fairly executed; and in the present instance the local occasional advantages of a few, are made a cloak for a starving parsimony towards the many.

Should these frivolous attempts to disguise or extenuate the cruel oppression prevalent in the foreign-fed colonies as to their scanty allowances, be thought worth any further answer, let it be observed, that Dr. Collins, to whom the nature and amount of these pretended aids of the subsistence given by the master were well known, considered them as too trivial, partial, and uncertain, to be worth any distinction or exception, either in his strictures on the existing scantiness of the master's allowances, or in his estimate of their necessary increase. Had they formed any ordinary or general resource, he could not have reasoned as he did on the famishing insufficiency of the weekly rations of "*six or seven pints of flour or* "*grain, with as many salt herrings,*" regarding them as the only nutriment; nor could he have asserted, as he solemnly did, on his own "*melancholy experience, that a great number of* "*negroes perished annually by diseases produced by inanition.*"

I will here conclude my account of that second grand head of general oppression under which these hapless fellow-creatures labour and perish, a distressful penury of food.

I might justly add to it very serious strictures on the *quality* of their provisions; for few I believe will suppose a diet wholly vegetable, well fitted to sustain the strength, and give full permanent support to the constitutions, of hard-working men? The proper or necessary quantity of admixture of animal food is a different question; but it may fairly be said, without any material qualification, that the common field-negroes have none at all; for as to the wretched modicum

of salt herring, or the brine it is dissolved in, we have seen, that even the apologists of the system admit it to be of no nutritious value, and to serve only as seasoning to the vegetable messes which they boil. The pretence that they frequently eat animal food of their own raising, such as fowls and pork, if applied to the common field-negroes, is not only false but preposterous; nor have many of my opponents ventured to suggest it, even when raising and exaggerating to the utmost every actual or occasional resource. It is true, that the head-negroes, who have double allowances, and possess various advantages besides, sometimes have a fowl or two, a pig, sheep or goat of their own raising; but even with *them* it would be deemed a strange extravagance to *feed on* such costly luxuries. They dispose of them in the markets; and buy more necessary, or at least cheaper articles, with the price. As to Mr. Barclay, who gravely places in the ordinary bills of fare of the Jamaica slaves in general, *fish*, and *land-crabs*, I will leave the reply to those who may think Gulliver or Munchausen worthy of serious refutation. From such fables, however, we may learn the consciousness of their authors, that the want of animal food was a hardship not easy to defend.

But supposing vegetable food alone to suffice, the kinds of it most commonly allowed to the slaves are indefensibly bad. I remember well, that when, during a scarcity and apprehension of famine in this country, the poor were in many places reduced to eat potatoes and rice, as partial substitutes for wheaten bread, their common complaint was, that such food, "though it filled the stomach, was not hearty enough to *work upon.*" How much less substantial the horse-beans, or unground Indian corn, or the wild yams, collaloo or spinage, the ochras, or other flimsy flatulent vegetables, on which the poor hard-worked negro is often driven to subsist, without any farinaceous food at all.

That men and women so subsisted, while working sixteen hours in the twenty-four, should neither maintain their numbers, nor live out half their days, can excite no surprise: but it may reasonably be a subject of wonder, that the loss by mortality among them is not much greater than it is; or rather than it appears to be. If we had returns of the black population, distinguishing the common field-negroes, from the less-

worked and better-fed part of the plantation gangs, and from the domestic slaves, the loss would be found much better proportioned to the power of the producing causes than the miserably defective register acts now enable us to discover.

But there are in our patient and plastic natures, means of accommodation to the pressure of necessity, far beyond what without experience would be easily believed. Witness the long fasts, during the laborious hunting excursions, of the North American Indians; and the preservation of ship-wrecked mariners, who have lived for weeks on a morsel of biscuit to each man per day. It is not strange then that, with the important aid of habit early or slowly formed, slaves have been brought to live long and work hard, under such a penury of food as has been here described. Happily perhaps for the lower classes in civilized society, it has not yet been ascertained by experiment, in the case of *free* persons, how much labour, with how little food, human nature may be trained to endure for many successive years; or even in vigorous frames, for the ordinary term of life. But this problem has in the sugar colonies been practically solved; and I have here given the sad results of its solution.

SECTION VI.—*The Subsistence of the Slaves shewn from comparative views to be extremely scanty and inadequate.*

Having now shewn what is the ordinary amount of food allowed to the slaves, when they depend wholly on the master's allowances for their support, I proceed to demonstrate more clearly its great and cruel insufficiency.

This to most of my readers may appear a superfluous task; but so imposing has been the hardihood of misrepresentation by the colonial party on this subject, that its further exposure may be useful. They have alleged, as I have shewn, not only that the sustentation of the slaves is copious and liberal, but that it is more so than that of the labouring poor, in this and other European countries; and have found gentlemen of high character to support by their public testimony, those extravagant propositions. Let me shew then how widely they are refuted in those statements, both positive and comparative, by the data now established.

For this purpose, I will first compare the amount of the weekly allowances by the master, where the slaves are subsisted in that mode, with the ordinary consumption of agricultural labourers in this country; next with that of other descriptions of persons, who are fed by rations at the public expense; and afterwards with the subsistence, of slaves in other countries, or under other circumstances, as far as I can find satisfactory information on that subject. The comparison cannot be extended in so direct a manner to the home-fed colonies; because the quantum of food obtained by slaves who raise their own provisions, cannot be ascertained, or reduced to any probable average. But I refer to the reasons already given for believing, that though the case from local circumstances is, in a general view, probably not so bad in Jamaica, or perhaps in some other colonies of that description, as where the subsistence is immediately and wholly a charge on the planter's purse, the same avaricious principle, by withholding a sufficient allowance of time, and exhausting the strength of the slaves in forced labour for the master, produces in a great degree the same oppressive effects.

I have noticed before, that Mr. Tobin defended the weekly allowances, on the assumption that they did not average more than six pints of corn or meal, and six herrings; and maintained that such subsistence was equal to that which an English labourer could purchase by his weekly earnings. My readers must be curious to know how so strange a proposition was made out; and I will, therefore, give the argument in his own words.

"A negro for himself, his wife and four children, receives "thirty-six pints of flour, &c. and thirty-six herrings. The "labourer earns six shillings a week to support himself, his "wife and his four children. With his six shillings he purchases "a bushel of wheat; he carries it to the mill, and brings home "two-thirds, or say even three-fourths, of it in flour. He has "therefore at most, but forty-eight pints of flour to divide "among his family; or two pints a week each more than the "negro; which difference is amply made up by the negro's "herrings." *

Strange enough is this mode of comparing the two cases; and stranger still the premises tacitly assumed for the purpose. The simplest, if not the only fair subjects of comparison, obviously would have been the quantum of food allowed to one working slave, and the value in subsistence of the wages earned by one free labourer. To resort to the cases of families, therefore, was at best needlessly to embarrass the question; but it was certainly highly convenient and necessary for the author's purpose, to multiply the slave's rations sixfold, by assigning to him a wife and four children all too young for work, and to reduce the food of the freeman derived from his wages in the same proportion, by assigning to him a like family. If such cases were the most ordinary ones in either country, or equally common in both, the selecting them for the purposes of this comparison might not have been unfair; but even in England, the labourers who have wives and four children under the age of work are comparatively few; and in the West Indies it would be a large estimate to say that it is the case of one field-negro in a thousand; as the known state of their population may suffice to prove. In re-

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* Cursory Remarks, p. 60.

gard therefore to the ordinary case of the labouring classes, in both countries, the comparison was irrelevant as well as deceptious. But it was built also on groundless assumptions. A labourer's family here, comprising so many young children, rarely if ever depends on the father's wages alone for support. If the wife and children cannot contribute to it, the parish for the most part does so. In many or more districts, the having even two children under the working age, constitutes systematically a claim on the overseers.

The assumption on the other side of the account, that the planter multiplies his allowances to his slave, when a father, by the number of his family, giving him, in addition to his own weekly rations, equal ones for the wife and every child, was still more unfounded. No such practice does, or ever did exist; and I recollect no assertion of it by any witness, or any other writer, on the colonial side. The most that is done, or alleged to be done, in such cases, is the giving some additional allowance to the mother, and even this I believe is rare, except when she has an infant to suckle.

Few comparatively among the common field-negroes have wives, or women recognised and steadily cohabiting with them as such; and when they have, the wife receives her own allowance without the husband's intervention or controul. She commonly works as hard as he does; and requires an equal measure of subsistence; nor can he derive any benefit from her allowances, unless she chooses to aggravate her own wants, by the voluntary alleviation of his. As to the weaned children in foreign-fed colonies, they are most commonly fed, till of an age for work, by the master, and not the parents. Their food is generally prepared for them in the way that is called "pot feeding," by a nurse or old woman appointed to take care of them, who receives the materials from the stores. But even where the practice is different, the parents can derive no benefit from a child's allowance, which is as much less than an adult's, as its necessities are estimated to permit.

These statements, it should be observed, relate only to the foreign-fed colonies, where the slaves depend on the master's rations for support. But so did Mr. Tobin's also. Would his premises, however, or his comparison, have been more sustain-

able, if applied to colonies where the slaves raise their own subsistence from the provision-grounds? By no means. On the contrary, the case there is still worse in respect of slaves who have children too young for work; because the father or mother, or both, if they would not see their infants in want of food, must raise enough for them as well as themselves, none being allowed by the master, and no additional time being given to the parents on that account. I venture to state these two last facts on private information only; but such as I can entirely rely upon. It cannot be expected that I should be able to cite the express evidence of opponents for every negative proposition; and here the information seems to me not only very credible in its nature (for where the only stores that the planter provides for his slaves in general are salt herrings, it would be highly inconvenient and troublesome to purchase vegetable food for the daily use of the children alone), but to derive strong confirmation from the silence of colonial witnesses and writers on this subject. The same persons who have admitted, in general terms, as to Jamaica and other home-fed colonies, that the slaves raise all their own provisions, herrings excepted, would not have omitted to add the exception of food purchased for the children, or to inform us that the parents were allowed extra time to raise it for them, if such had been the case; but I find neither of these practices any where taken credit for; or any distinction made between slaves who have, and those who have not families, as to the time allowed them for what is called "*working for themselves.*"

But let us return to Mr. Tobin's comparison:—the only one that has descended from vague generalities into specifications with which it is possible to grapple.

To find fault with his assumed rate of wages, may seem hardly worth while; but wages, I conceive, were averaged too low at six shillings, though he took wheat at six shillings a bushel. The author also took care to add in a note that the price was sometimes as high as eight or nine shillings; but omitted to notice that wages commonly rose in proportion. The part of England, with the agricultural state of which I am best acquainted, the north-western districts of Buckinghamshire, is one in which the condition of the farmers and their labourers, is, from the general poverty of the soil,

and other known causes, rather below, than above, the average of the kingdom at large; yet there, while I write, wheat is at about six shillings a bushel, and full wages at nine shillings a week. If these proportions be not more than commonly in the labourer's favour, Mr. Tobin's premises were in this respect also erroneous, to the extent of no less than one-third part: he should have allowed to the English labourer a bushel and a half, instead of a bushel per week, as what his wages might purchase.

To his proposition, that the wheat, when reduced into flour, will lose one-fourth of its bulk, I object only the manifest inconsistency of his not making any such deduction from the negro's allowance; though this, as we have seen, even on his own authority in his parliamentary evidence, consists often of Guinea or Indian corn, and other unground grain; and frequently, as other planters admitted, of horse-beans.

But my readers will probably think that errors of one-third and one-fourth part, might well have been left unnoticed, after those gigantic ones which multiplied the slave's allowance by six, and divided by the same number the produce of the free labourer's wages, affecting the comparison as between single men, in the ratio of twelve to one. Had his premises and reasoning been correct, the consequences would strangely have been, that in his English family case, there would have been too little food by five-sixths; or too much in his West India family case, in the same proportion; but as to the unmarried labourers in the respective countries, the contrast, very adversely to his purpose, would have been inverted. In England, each single labourer would have gained enough to feed six mouths; in the West Indies, enough only for his own.

Mr. Tobin's criterion, however, if fairly applied to the clearly intelligible case of single men, is one of the simplest and best that can be found to determine, either in a positive or comparative view, the sufficiency of the slave's subsistence. I will therefore endeavour to ascertain more truly and accurately than he did, the nutritious value of the slave's allowances on the one hand, and the quantity of like nutriment that the free man may purchase with his wages on the other. What the

latter *does* purchase, and consume, is a different consideration, but one which I shall afterwards notice.

The first step in such an enquiry is to reduce, if we can, the nutritious value of the food in both cases, to a known and common standard; which must be that of wheat flour; being the article on which our labourers are chiefly fed, and which alone is sometimes common to them and the slaves; and the nutritive value of which also, we well know from experience in this country. This problem however, cannot be easily solved, so as to do full justice to my own side of the controversy; not only because the horse beans, and the unground Indian or Guinea corn, &c., are here unknown as articles of human food, but because the colonial evidence leaves it wholly uncertain in what proportions respectively to the flour those articles constitute the ordinary rations of the slaves. I must in consequence be content to rely on evidence by which the colonial side of the question was, as there is every reason to believe, unduly and greatly favoured.

The act of the Leeward Islands, as we have seen, takes nine pints of whole corn or beans, as equivalent to eight pints of wheat flour; for in professing to enforce the adequate subsistence of slaves, *that* was the ratio in which the act allowed the different articles to be commuted, at the masters' election, for each other. This, I conceive, to have much disparaged the flour; for I cannot believe that a pint of unground Guinea corn, Indian corn, or beans, can yield as much nutriment to the human frame within one ninth part, as a pint of wheaten flour separated from the bran!

I will adhere, however, to my ordinary rule of not taking into my calculations any thing that I cannot support by colonial authority. Let it be supposed therefore that the allowances, in whatever form given, are equal in point of nutrition to eight ninth parts of so much wheat flour. I will be content further to suppose that the number of pints given weekly, on an average of all seasons of the year, is seven; which being a pint per diem, will simplify computation, and I will waive the deduction of one ninth part, since it cannot be ascertained in what degree corn and beans constitute the food. On the other hand let the salt herring, as for reasons already given it fairly may, be fairly thrown out of the account. Let it be

supposed then that the slaves in the foreign-fed colonies receive, on an average, a subsistence equal to fourteen ounces of wheaten flour per diem; for this is the utmost weight of a pint of flour.

What proportion, let us next enquire, does this bear to the quantity of the same article which an English agricultural labourer can obtain from his wages? As the rates of wages vary greatly in different parts of the country, and at different seasons of the year, and in a considerable degree with the price of bread, and are now unhappily blended with parochial allowances from the poor rates, their average cannot be clearly ascertained: but if we suppose an unmarried labourer so constantly employed as to make no calls on the parish, to receive nine shillings per week when wheat is at six shillings per bushel, it will not, I conceive, be too favourable a view of the general case. At that price flour will be about three half pence per pound. His wages then, if laid out in flour, would produce him seventy-two pounds per week, or ten pounds, four ounces and a half per day. Difference in his favour when compared with the slave, sixty five pounds fourteen ounces weekly, and nine pounds six ounces and a half daily; being about eleven and a half to one.

If we take the amount in bread, instead of flour, the difference will be still greater; for without any trouble, or cost for kneading or baking, the English labourer may obtain for the same wages seventy eight pounds and three ounces of good well baked bread;* whereas the poor slave has no baker's shop to resort to; but must work up the raw and gross materials of his allowance into an eatable form, how he may, at a cost of time and labour he can very ill afford, and with a certain loss in its nutritious powers from its crude and hasty preparation.

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* I take here the weight of the quartern loaf at four pounds five ounces and a half, and the price at sixpence, being the right proportion to the assumed price of wheat, viz. six shillings per bushel. These were the prices when this calculation was long since made; and wages at the same place were nine shillings per week; but both have since been, and I believe are, materially different. To fix the present rates would hardly be worth delay, as such data obviously can have no general and stable accuracy. Let the reader then make whatever allowances or corrections he thinks reasonable. My argument can abundantly spare abatements.

We have seen that a piece of bread, or a ship's biscuit, is so much more strengthening to him than his ordinary food, that it is given as a cordial to sustain him in the most arduous kinds of work; and that eight pounds of this latter article weekly is by the act of the Leeward Islands, regarded as an equivalent for the raw allowances.

While these facts demonstrate the utter falsehood and extravagance of the common though strange pretext of my opponents, that the slave's condition, as to means of subsistence, is equal to that of the free labourer in this country; they fall short, it may be said, of proving that the former is in fact more scantily fed than the latter; for the English labourer does not, and cannot spend all his wages in bread or flour.

Certainly not, I admit; nor if he is a single man, one half perhaps of his weekly nine shillings; but it is because he spends the rest in a manner more to his comfort, or more at least to his mind. He adds to his bread and flour, pudding, fat bacon and cheese, of which our cottagers are no small consumers; and not only some tea and sugar, but occasionally some butcher's meat, though in portions I am sorry to admit but scanty. He spends something too, and often much more than is prudent, in that wholesome beverage malt liquor. These, and other humble luxuries, to which the poor negro is equally a stranger, vary the modes of the free labourer's subsistence; but should this be thought in any point doubtful, or unimportant, still the substantial fact remains, that he has nine shillings a week for his labour, equal to the purchase of seventy-two pounds of flour, while the negro has only seven pints of flour, weighing each fourteen ounces, or their estimated value in other articles of an inferior kind.

"But the peasant has also to find his own *clothes*." Granted; and he *does* find them, of a kind and in a quantity so very far superior to those which the planter allows to his slaves, that it may be safely affirmed, the clothing of six of them does not cost as much as that of one free labourer. I shall prove this clearly in a subsequent division of the subject of maintenance. There is no point in which the contrast between the two states is at once so striking, and so clearly beyond dispute.

"The labourer has also rent to pay for his cottage," it is added. Doubtless; and a serious charge it would some-

times be, if to be defrayed out of his ordinary weekly wages. It is commonly provided for by his extra gains at harvest time, and other incidental resources, which my opponents leave out of the account. They reason most inconsistently in doing so; for they value against the poor slave, whose time is not his own during sixteen hours out of the twenty four, every possibility of adding to his subsistence by voluntary industry during the remainder, and on the Sabbath days; and yet allow to the English labourer however industrious, no such means of adding to his ordinary wages; though, with the full enjoyment of the Sabbath rest, he has fifteen hours on an average on the other six days not employed in his master's service.

Have these gentlemen, besides, never heard of working "by "the *great*" or "the piece" and of the great increase of wages that a man of superior industry may earn that way? or do they suppose, that there are no other means by which a thrifty handworking man in this country may employ his spare time to advantage? Every labourer has not, I admit with concern, a garden to his cottage, or any other piece of ground that he can cultivate; though such advantages are attainable here by prudent and industrious peasants, more generally, and in a far greater degree than by a great majority of the slaves in our foreign fed colonies; and there are various other means by which such men occasionally may, and do, add to their domestic comforts; especially when seconded by the good conduct of their wives and children. That a great number of our single, and many even of our married labourers, neglect all such means, and loiter away their many evening hours, or spend them at an ale-house, is too true; but even their ability to do this, might afford a conclusive argument that they are not distressed like the poor negro, by actual hunger, or scantiness of food.

Medical care in sickness, another topic of comparison often brought forward by my opponents, shall be hereafter discussed:—they seem not to know that it is here provided by the parish, or by public hospitals. But my immediate subject is *food;* and it may be fairly assumed, that this first and most urgent demand of nature, will not be left unsatisfied, the wages sufficing to answer it, though the clothes should be

unbought, and the landlord and apothecary unpaid. It is amply enough, therefore, for my present purpose, to have proved that the labourer's wages will procure for him, if not an abundance of provisions, at least ten or eleven times as much in quantity, and far better in kind, than those to which the poor negro is restricted.

Means, however, are not wanting to prove more directly that our agricultural labourers, in fact, consume a much greater quantity of provisions than the plantation slave is allowed; as well as of a far more wholesome and nutritious kind.

In the present depressed state of agriculture, the overseers in many country parishes the most overburthened with poor, have, with the concurrence of the neighbouring magistrates, established a standard for the *minimum* of allowances from the poor rates to labourers out of employment, or who can find work only on the parish account, or at such low wages as must be aided from the parochial purse; in which standard they have adopted, as the basis of calculation, the ratio of a half peck loaf weekly, for each individual in the labourer's family, however young, that depends on him for support, as indispensably necessary to keep them from actual want. When the wages will not purchase so much bread, the difference is made good from the rates.

Now a half-peck loaf contains eight pounds eleven ounces of good wheaten bread; which is one pound three ounces and a half per diem for each individual, the children included: whereas the adult hard-working slave, as we have seen, has only fourteen ounces of raw flour for each day; or such a quantity of corn or horsebeans, as, notwithstanding the estimate of the Leeward Island assembly, can hardly be deemed an adequate commutation.

For further satisfaction on this interesting subject, I have taken pains to learn, through the best channels of information, the experience of village bakers, what quantity of bread our country labourers actually consume in ordinary cases; and find by several concurrent accounts, that a single man generally consumes at least three quartern loaves weekly, with a quantity of flour in addition, equal to half of another quartern loaf; and that in families, the consumption is at the rate of

two quartern loaves weekly for each individual, children included, without reckoning the fiour, which they purchase to be prepared for family use in other forms of food.

Though by no means necessary for my present purpose, it ought not to be left out of the account, that where the man works hardest, he requires the most support. Now let it be recollected, that the average time of the free labourer's work, is not more than nine hours in twenty-four; while that of the slave, in crop-time, is twice as much; and on an average of the whole year, sixteen. It should also be remembered that the one, is performed in a climate where the framè, at most seasons, loses little by perspiration; the other, where the waste from that cause is always so great as to demand an increased nutrition.

To shew the difference made by these causes, when combined, I might adduce the case of our own labourers in time of harvest; for they are then, in many places, fed by the employer; and I have been astonished to hear from friends engaged in agriculture, of the large quantities their workmen consume at that season, not merely of their ordinary provisions, but of animal food, which they have little of at other seasons, and of that nutritious beverage, beer, to which the poor negro is at all times a stranger. When they feed themselves at their own charge, they probably may live less freely; but a much higher rate of wages in harvest-time enables them to supply, as they doubtless do in a great degree, those enlarged demands of nature, which are consequent on an increased intensity and duration of their work, combined with the heat of the season.

I will not pursue further this comparison, as there is, in truth, after all, nothing homogeneous in the subjects. When the English labourers are forced to live on unground Guinea corn and horse-beans, to toil during sixteen hours in the twenty-four, and watch and work through the remaining eight on alternate nights, for five months in the year; when they cannot rest even on the Sabbath-day, and when their wives and children, instead of being helpmates, under their own domestic government and protection, are, like themselves, the property of a master, on whom, and not their parents, their well or ill being wholly depends; in a word, when our

soil is tilled not by free fellow-subjects, but by the most degraded and oppressed of slaves, it will be time enough to compare their different situations as to the quantity of food. At present a comparison, in that respect, of the field negroes, with the draught cattle in their owner's stables, would be, in a just view fairer, and rather more illustrative. I deem it, nevertheless, not unimportant to shew how clearly my opponents, who have had the strange boldness to compare the two conditions, would be refuted by their own evidence, even if we were to estimate the state of a rational, a moral, and immortal being by the standard of the manger or the trough.

I will not content myself, however, with having thus retorted on the planters the comparison they have rashly provoked. Let them turn, if they will, from our free and self-maintained peasantry, to our criminal vagrants and felons, when fed at the public charge. Let them ransack our houses of correction and our gaols; and find there, if they can, any parallel to that cruel parsimony with which they feed their innocent hard-working slaves.

For this purpose an abundance of authoritative information may be found in an appendix to the seventh printed Report of the Committee of the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, &c.; from which I extract the following particulars:—

In the *Bedfordshire Penitentiary*, each prisoner is allowed two pounds of bread daily; and if at hard labour a quart of soup for dinner is added.

In the *Cambridge County Gaol and House of Correction*, every prisoner on hard labour is allowed three pounds of bread daily, and a pint of small beer.

In the *Leicestershire House of Correction*, the allowances are two pounds of bread per day, and three pints of gruel. Those prisoners who are at hard larbour, have in addition daily one pint of new milk at breakfast, and twice a week a pint of good meat soup at dinner, instead of the gruel.

In the *Gloucestershire County Gaol and Penitentiary*, the dietary for prisoners who labour is as follows—one pound and a half of the best bread daily, and for breakfast, one ounce and a half of oatmeal, with salt, leeks, or other vegetables in season, made into gruel. They have, in addition, for

their dinners, on Tuesdays and Fridays, three quarters of a pint of peas made into a soup with legs and shins of beef; on Mondays and Saturdays two pounds and a half of potatoes; on Sundays and Wednesdays two ounces and a half of rice, and two ounces of oatmeal made into soup, with legs and shins of beef; and on Thursdays half a pound of beef without bone, and one pound of potatoes.

In the *Millbank General Penitentiary* their allowances are—for breakfast, a quarter of a pint of milk mixed with water, and boiled with half an ounce of flour, together with half a pound of bread. For supper the same articles. For dinner, on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, six ounces of beef, exclusive of bone and loss of weight in boiling, with half a pint of the broth made therefrom, one pound of potatoes, and half a pound of bread. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, one quart of the preceding day's boiling liquor, thickened with Scotch barley, rice, potatoes, or peas; with the addition of cabbage, turnips, or other cheap vegetables, one pound of boiled potatoes, and half a pound of bread. On Saturday two ounces of cheese, and one pound of bread, with onions.

The dietaries of various other prisons are specified in the same report; and though there are considerable differences between them, both in the qualities and quantities of food, the most parsimonious subsistence to be found among them, with one or two exceptions, cannot be regarded as less in their nutritious value than two pounds of bread per diem, being more than two-fold that of the hard-worked negro slaves, while the average is greatly higher.

Anothor example of prison feeding in this country, that of the *House of Correction at Brixton*, has met my eye, just as I am revising this sheet for the press; and is well worth adding, because it was the subject of discussion at a very recent public meeting of the Surry Magistrates, in which the sufficiency of the regulated allowance for prisoners in general, and the necessity of increasing them for health's sake to such as were compelled to labour in the tread-mill, were fully considered, and with the benefit of medical advice.

The ordinary allowances were admitted to be as follows:—Ten and a half pounds of bread, ten and a half pints of gruel, ten and a half pints of soup, one pound of beef, and five and

a half pounds of potatoes, weekly, to each individual; boys and girls included. But the surgeon, with the concurrence of the visiting magistrates, had ordered large additions in a great number of cases, to prisoners who were put to labour on the mill; and this was censured by one or two of the gentlemen present at the meeting, as a wasteful and impolitic excess, tending to make the prison, in the present bad times for the poorer classes, an object rather of desire than terror. The surgeon, therefore, was called on for explanations; and he gave them so much to the satisfaction of the meeting in general, that the subject was dropped. He admitted that the established allowances were in general sufficient; but stated, that the visiting magistrates had concurred with him in ordering the additional food, because the labours which the prisoners had to undergo were snch as could not be borne in all cases on those ordinary allowances; adding, that he had tried experiments, for the purpose of convincing himself that the prisoners in question were suffering from the effects of the labour and the insufficient diet; and had found that in many instances they had lost twelve or fourteen pounds in the weight of their bodies, before he ordered for them the extra allowance.*

What the amount of daily labour producing these effects is at Brixton, I am not able to state; as the account I cite from is silent on that subject; but the Report of the Society, before referred to, states the time of work in other prisons as less on a medium than eight hours per day. In the Bedfordshire Penitentiary, for instance, we are told that the prisoners work nine hours a day in summer, eight hours in the spring, and six hours in winter, averaging seven hours and forty minutes; and these penal labours are probably no where of much longer duration.

Let us look, then, at the shocking and opprobrious result. The English vagabond or felon, when imprisoned for his crimes, has a subsistence which, upon the lowest general estimate that can be found, is at least two-fold superior in nutritious value to that of the poor West Indian Negro, whose

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* I refer to the proceedings of the meeting as reported in the Morning Chronicle of January 13th, 1830

freedom has been forfeited by no crime of his own; but solely by the deep, publickly acknowledged, legislatively recorded, crime of this enlightened Christian land, perpetrated against himself or his African progenitors. The one is thus fed while in idleness. When forced to labour his subsistence is still larger The other, though his forced and permanent labours are twice as great, has at best not half the food. Yet, the former allowances are limited by the necessity of the case, the necessity of saving him from wasting of the body, from debility, sickness, and death. What, then, must be the consequences of giving less than half the subsistence to the ultra-laborious slaves? What they actually are, my readers have sufficiently seen. They cannot be better summed up than in the emphatic words before cited, from Dr. Collins, and well worth repetition:—" *With so scanty a pittance, it is, indeed, possible* " *for the soul aud body to be held together a considerable time,*" &c.; *but the negroes, the weaklier sort at least,* " *crawl about* " *with feeble emaciated frames,—their attempts to wield the hoe* " *prove abortive, they shrink from their toil, and being urged to* " *perseverance by stripes, you are soon obliged to receive them* " *into the hospital, whence, unless your plan be speedily corrected,* " *they depart but to the grave.*" " *I aver it boldly, melancholy* " *experience having given me occasion to make the remark, that a* " *great number of negroes have perished annually by diseases* " *produced by inanition.*"

It remains to compare, as I proposed, the parsimonious allowances of the sugar planter, with the subsistence of slaves, in other countries, or under other circumstances, not presenting to the master the same temptations to a sordid and relentless œconomy.

Here let me, in the first place, refer again to the statements in my former volume, as to the allowances in the Bahamas; where from the failure of the sugar-cane and other exportable products of agriculture, the land and the labour of slaves are not of too much value to be largely employed by the owners in raising indigenous food. It was shewn that the subsistence of slaves there, compared with that of the Leeward Islands, is in the proportion of about two to one, while the labour is lighter, perhaps in nearly the same proportion; and that the

happy effects had been manifested by a rapid increase of population, and a copious progressive enfranchisement.*

The same statutable allowances which I there cited from an act of the Bahamas of 1797, are prescribed by the last act of the same legislature, passed in January 1824. The master is required to give to every slave above the age of ten, one peck of Indian or Guinea corn, or twenty-one pints of wheat flour per week; while the law of the Leeward Islands still prescribes as *humane and liberal subsistence*, nine pints of the one, and eight pints of the other.†

The last Consolidation Act of Jamaica, that of December, 1816, clause 69, furnishes an express standard of sufficiency in the case of slaves confined in the workhouses and gaols of that island. The keepers are required to give to every slave in their custody, "*a sufficient quantity* of good and "wholesome provisions daily; *that is to say*, not less than one "quart of unground Guinea or Indian corn, or three pints of "the flour or meal of either, or three pints of wheat flour, "or certain specified commutations in other vegetable articles, "with one herring or shad.‡"

What clearer or more authoritative condemnation of the masters in the foreign-fed colonies, and their law-givers too, can be desired? Their allowances of food to hard-working negroes, even if the general practice conformed to the meliorating law, would be less by about one-half, than the quantities here prescribed as the minimum of adequate support to the same people when in gaol. That the council and assembly of Jamaica were highly competent judges on the subject will not be denied; nor will it be supposed that their estimate of sufficiency was purposely excessive. They could not mean to encourage desertion and other offences, and aggravate needlessly the public expence, by a superfluous liberality in the rations. Yet if these are not more than sufficient, the slaves

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* Appendix to Vol. I. No. III.

† See the Act of Bahamas, *Parliamentary Papers, presented by His Majesty's command*, in 1825, Clause II., and the Act of the Leeward Islands, before referred to.

‡ See the Act in the Paliamentary Papers printed by order of the House of Commons, of the 10th of June 1818, p. 66.

in the Leeward Islands must be half starved; and would be so, even were their allowances increased in the degree that Dr. Collins ventured to recommend. He advised that they should be raised to ten or twelve pints weekly, when the slaves depended wholly upon them; but even this, if the Jamaica estimate be right, would be from seven to nine pints less than enough. Had that writer possessed the power of legislation, he would, I doubt, not have thought the same.

Let us next look at the practice of slave masters in the United States of North America. For this, I may consistently quote anti-slavery authority, for it respects not our own colonies, but is a statement of the Manumission Society of New York, which certainly had no wish to magnify the liberality of American slave masters. "The planters of South Carolina, "allow to each slave per week a peck of Indian corn, five "pounds of bacon, and a pint of molasses; but in the upper "country where provisions are more abundant, the few slaves "there fare nearly as well as their masters. They are neither "tasked in their work, nor limited in their provisions."

By not being tasked in their work, we must obviously understand not over-worked; and it is certain that the slaves in that country are not *driven*. As they are also sufficiently fed, we have an adequate explanation of the fact, that instead of the declining progress of population which has always characterized our sugar colonies, the negro slaves in Carolina, a far less healthy climate for African constitutions, have a rapid native increase.

If I do not pursue these comparative views into the sugar colonies of foreign powers, it is not because I believe the subsistence there to be as scanty as in our own; but because the modes of it are for the most part so dissimilar to those which are in use in the British West Indies, especially in our foreign-fed islands, as to preclude any clear comparison between them. It is an admitted fact that in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies the slaves are better treated in all respects, than in our own; but as to their subsistence, it is derived chiefly, if not wholly, from their own provision grounds, which are everywhere in those colonies abundant; and so is the time which they have for their own use. "In some parts of the Brazils," says the Privy Council Report, "the slaves are allowed two

" days in the week to work for themselves." * Superstition also is friendly to this degraded class in the bigoted catholic colonies of Portugal and Spain, from the number of church holidays in which they are absolved from work in the master's service.

The system in the French islands is more analogous to our own; and it is evident from the regulations of *Le Code Noir*, that over-working and under-feeding were there frequent enough to demand, and obstinate enough to elude, the restraints of law. The former species of oppression has been alleged by some of our colonists to exceed that of the British planters; which I do not believe, because I cannot conceive the possibility of any such excess; but it is admitted by the same authorities in general, that the feeding is better. " The " French," says Dr. Collins, " who have been so much cele- " brated for their better treatment of their slaves, excel us in " nothing so much as in the articles of feeding and clothing; " for in some respects they do not treat them so well, as they " punish offences with greater severity, and work them harder " than we do; but then offences occur rarely, and their capa- " city for labour is much greater where provisions are abun- " dantly supplied; as they are in the French islands." †

But little stress is to be laid, in a moral view, on these diversities between the practice of sugar planters, whether British or foreign. They depend chiefly on differences of local circumstances; and wherever the driving system prevails, the same oppressive principle, the result of commercial competition, directs the use of it in whatever various forms; namely that of exacting as much of work, with as little expence for the labourer's support, as in the eye of a rigidly calculating œconomy, is thought to be at all compatible with the preservation of the gang. The natural consequence also is every where the same. Individual avarice pushed on by competition frequently overshoots its mark; and by an excess of exaction, or of parsimony, or of both, beyond what nature can sustain, produces on many plantations a waste of life, more than enough to counterbalance the native increase on others, and

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* Privy Council Report, Part IV. title Portugal.

† Practical Rules, p. 92.

make the tide of population refluent in the colony at large, except when kept up by the slave trade.

After all, there is no subject of comparison in respect of food, nor any single fact in relation to it, more painfully impressive, than the more liberal and abundant subsistence to which the poor Africans are accustomed in their native land. This, like every other part of the case, was a subject of gross and fatal misrepresentation on the part of the West India committee, and the slave-traders with whom they made common cause, before the committee of privy council and parliament. Because famines, partial ones at least, have been known in Africa, it was held forth, in defence of the slave-trade, that its victims were carried from a state of want and hunger into plenty; and even that they sold themselves for food.* Many a credulous dupe of colonial impostures was led to believe that they actually had the benefit of a transition from scanty and precarious, into abundant and sure subsistence. Some of the West India writers had the confidence to treat this alleged benefit as a compensation for slavery and exile.

But in this, as in most other instances, the valuable volume I have so often quoted, brought the truth clearly, though tardily to light; and proved, as usual, that the real case was the very reverse of the alleged one. Dr. Collins has shewn, in the most satisfactory and decisive way, that instead of the African captives exchanging hunger for fulness of bread, they had, by a difficult, and often deathful process, to exchange the full feeding of their native land and their Pagan masters, for the starving pittances of food to which the avarice of their Christian-English purchasers reduced them in the sugar colonies.

I refer here chiefly to his chapter on the "*Seasoning of* "*Negroes*," and that "*on Diet*." From the latter I have already extracted abundantly enough to shew how inadequately, in the experienced author's judgment, the slaves in general were fed; and in his chapter on the seasoning of new negroes, we find him expostulating more strongly still against the same murderous parsimony in *their* case, on account of the full feeding to which they were accustomed in their native

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* See Vol. I. 361 to 363, and 380, 381.

land. That treatment of new negroes, while the African slave-trade prevailed, which was called their "seasoning," was in fact a training, not only to hard work, but to scanty diet, to both of which they were equally unaccustomed prior to their exile; and the reducing them to the ordinary subsistence of the creole or seasoned slave, was, it appears, a difficult, and often too hurried a part of the process, from the effects of which great numbers of them perished. "The most fre-
"quent error in the feeding of new negroes is the not giving
"them enough. *Having been accustomed in their own country*
"*to eat until their stomachs are so full as to contain no more,*
"they ill brook limitation," &c.* Again, "an error in this
"respect bears particularly hard on *new negroes*, because they
"are *not formed to habits of temperance, and have little inclina-*
"*tion to learn them on their arrival among us.*"†

And what was the *intemperance* from which these poor creatures were to be weaned? The author tells us, that it was no more than a plentiful use of vegetable food. "The diet
"should be, as near as possible such as they have been ac-
"customed to in their own country, where yams and plantains
"generally constitute the principal part of it; but whatever
"is given to them, it should be with a liberal hand."‡

Though it is probably true that the natives of Africa near the coast live chiefly on those articles, and rice, it appears, from the accounts of those who have visited the interior of that continent, that they have in most places, if not every where, no small addition of animal food. But they have, as is here admitted, an abundance, at least of vegetable diet, notwithstanding the easy, not to say indolent lives they lead: and they are accustomed, we find, to such plentiful meals, as to require a breaking-in of a severe, and often fatal kind, before their natures can be made to endure the short allowances of their West India Christian masters.

In my former volume I took occasion frequently to compare the condition of the British colonial slave, in point of law, with that of the English bondmen called villeins, and of the slaves in Greece and Rome, and other countries in ancient and modern times: and few were the points of comparison in which

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* Practical Rules, p. 59. † Ibid. 59, 60. ‡ Ibid. 68.

the result was not shewn to be opprobrious to the laws of our West India islands. In the present division of my work there has been little or no room for similar illustrations, because the *œconomical* oppressions of the sugar colonies, to which I confine myself, are quite *sui generis*, or have no precedents, at least within my knowledge, either in practice or principle, in any case that ancient or modern writers have described.

There is one historical book, however, with which, as Christians, we are familiar, that furnishes an exception to these remarks. The slavery of the Israelites in Egypt, the nature of which may be collected from many passages in the Bible, partook, towards its close at least, of œconomical oppression. Though not driven, they were tasked in the manufacture of bricks; and an increase of their labours, by compelling them to gather straw for the purpose, which had before been furnished by their employers, was a hardship of which they bitterly complained. They were scattered over the land gathering straw, and yet the exacted tale of bricks was not diminished. The striking resemblance between this grievance and the grass-picking drudgery of the sugar colonies, has been noticed by anti-slavery writers; and the two cases have other resemblances sufficiently impressive. The new hardship was a penal infliction by royal authority, consequent on the first interposition of Moses and Aaron; and was imposed on the pretence, that to favour idleness was the tendency and object of their mediation, and that the pious motives alleged by them were a mere subterfuge. "*Where-fore do ye let the people from their works?*"—"*Get ye unto your burthens.*"—"*They be idle; therefore they cry, saying "Let us go and sacrifice to our God.*"—"*Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.*"—"*Ye shall no more give the people straw to make bricks; let them go and gather straw for themselves.*"

Again to the complaining people it was said, by the inexorable monarch, "*Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord; go therefore now and work; for there shall no straw be given you; yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.*"*

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* See Exodus, chap. v.

"There is nothing new under the sun." If any man doubts whether the apologies of modern slave masters furnish a confirmation of this proverb, let him turn to the many defences of Sabbath work in our sugar colonies, or to the voluminous reports of Major Moody, in which, "*they be idle, they be idle,*" is the perpetual burthen of the song; and "*wherefore do ye* "*let the people from their work,*" the as constant expostulation with all who, in obedience to the general behests of the Most High, would alleviate the burthens, or promote the civil, moral and religious welfare of the much oppressed negroes.

We have no account of the former tasks of the Israelites which were thus aggravated. The tale of bricks is not specified; but brick-making in its nature could not have been very laborious work; and neither this nor straw-gathering could well extend into the night.

But the comparison in point to my immediate purpose, is the liberality of subsistence with which this forced work of Egypt was repaid to the enslaved labourers. They had abundance of flocks and herds, and the fruitful land of Goshen was their own. They were able so largely to indulge in animal as well as vegetable food, that the "flesh pots of Egypt," were long a subject of deep regret, and impious murmuring, after they were delivered from their bondage. "The whole "congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the "wilderness, and said unto them, would to God we had died "by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat "by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full.*

I am unaware that there is any account in English writers, of the ordinary subsistence of the bondmen formerly called villeins in this country; but enough has come down to us respecting their general condition, and the manners of the times, to furnish a strong presumption, that scantiness of food was not among the hardships of their lot.

The villeins in gross, or personal bondmen, probably partook of the abundance which reigned in the mansions of the feudal chiefs, their masters, who did not, like West India planters, spend their slave-raised revenues in a distant land, but made it their pride, as well as policy, to maintain great

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* Numbers, Chap. xvi. ver. 2. and 3.

numbers of their retainers and vassals in attendance upon them at their castles and country seats. Of their great consumption of animal food, on festive occasions, we have many striking accounts; and may well infer that the ordinary surplus of provisions from the baron's table alone must have furnished an abundant supply to their servile domestics.

But the great mass of the ancient bondmen were villeins *regardant*, i. e. attached to the manor, who raised their own provisions, having ample allotments of land for their own use and benefit, and giving in return only such a portion of labour as by their common contributions at stated periods, sufficed for the culture of the lord's particular domain. Those personal, or, as they were called, base services, assessed, no doubt, originally at the lord's arbitrament on the individual bondmen, or on their holdings within the manor, seem always to have been very moderate; probably because the arable part of the lord's domain, cultivated on his own account, was generally very small, compared with the number of the villeins attached to the manor, and the amount of their collective holdings. The lands retained in his own hand were, for the most part, pasture or waste, and woodlands, and in the use of these his servile tenants were permitted, with various modifications, to share. The plough and waggon or wain were in universal use from the earliest period of our authentic history. We derive even their names from our Saxon ancestors, and *ploughlands*, in Doomsday Book and other ancient records, is the ordinary definition of lands under tillage.

Such being the case, and working-cattle and pasture being abundant, the lords had no temptation to exact from their predial bondmen any excess of manual labour; still less, to make it the substitute, as in our sugar colonies, for all those beneficent mechanical means by which the primæval curse has been mitigated in the culture of the soil. On the contrary, they had much more servile labour at command than they could profitably employ; and a sufficient proof of it is the easy terms on which the base services were every where progressively commuted for small payments in money, corn, or other articles, or for fines upon death or alienation, the original sources, no doubt, of most of our modern quit-rents and copyhold fines.

A still stronger proof, perhaps, of the same fact, or at least of the moderation of the personal service among manorial villeins, is the great facility with which the lords gave or connived at their enfranchisement; for either by express manumission, or such acquiescence in their use of free privileges as amounted to enfranchisement by construction of law, the whole class, once forming the chief part of our population, were converted, without any legislative measures, into freemen.

By a cotemporary progress, their lands also became free in fact, though not in name, being still said to be held at the will of the lord, as under the denomination of copyholds they are to this day; but in effect by a perpetual customary tenure, which the law upheld against him. His customary payments, indeed, were left to him; but excess in their assessment was restrained, even when by custom they were arbitrary, as fines on death or alienation. Some personal duties also remained as they still do, under the names of homage, suit and service, but they soon ceased to be burthensome on the tenants, and dwindled into a mere occasional attendance for the purposes of presentments, &c. at the baronial courts.

Now what I would infer from these facts is, that men who thus rose rapidly from bondage into independence and territorial wealth, could not, during the process, have been subjected to an oppressive penury of food, and of the other necessaries of life. The wants of nature were, doubtless, satisfied from the produce of their industry before they made those payments to the lord which became so regular and so long continued a commutation for the labour of the manorial villeins as to grow into prescriptive right.

That the slaves in *Greece* and *Rome* were not in general scantily fed, may be inferred from many passages in classical writers, to some of which I have referred in my former volume.* Freedom was very often purchased by means of the slave's *peculium*, or property of his own acquiring; and that its acquisition most commonly arose from savings out of the master's allowances, might be fairly inferred from the characteristic sketch of Seneca, if we had no other information on

* See title Redemption, p. 379, &c. and the authorities there cited.

the subject. "Slaves," he says, "pay as the price of their "emancipation the money which they have defrauded their "stomachs to amass."* Terence alludes to the same abstinence among the slaves, practised doubtless from the same motive, when he puts into the mouth of one of that hapless order the remark that what a brother slave had with difficulty saved out of his allowance ounce by ounce, was destined by him as a nuptial present to his master's son, and would be wasted by the wife.† Cicero also apparently had the same frugal abstinence as ordinary means of obtaining freedom in view, when he says that a slavery of six years is longer than slaves, made such by captivity in war, if frugal and industrious, usually sustain. ‡

Now if the means of paying for enfranchisement could be prepared by frugality or abstinence, in the use of the customary allowances of food from the master, these of course could not be inadequate to the urgent wants of nature, but must in some degree have exceeded them; for few, if any, would have endured willingly, the present pangs of hunger to obtain the distant chance of future benefit. When we are told by Seneca, that the peculium was accumulated as the price of freedom, "*ventre fraudato*;" it is not necessary or natural to understand more than that they subducted for that purpose, and sold, part of the food allowed for their support.

Among the numberless falsehoods by which West India slavery long has been, and still is defended, I am not aware that any pen or tongue has alleged a similar economy, for that or any purpose, among the plantation slaves. We are told, and most fallaciously told, that some of them acquire property, and a degree of wealth sufficient to buy their freedom, by means

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* Mancipia peculium suum quod comparaverunt *ventre fraudato* pro capite numerant. Senec. Epis. 80.

† Quod ille unciatim vix de demenso suo, suum defraudans genium comparsit miser, id illa universum abripiet. Ter. Phorm. i. 1. 9.

‡ Et enim P. C. cum in spem libertatis sexennio post simul ingressi, diutiusque servitutem perpessi quam *captivi* frugi et diligentes solent. Phill. viii. 11.

Captivi, or war slaves, must here be understood emphatically; for the *vernæ*, or slaves born in the master's family, were treated with much greater lenity and favour.

of voluntary industry; "most fallaciously," because the cases alleged in proof of it, supposing them real, are too few to be of any account in a general estimate of the condition of the slaves at large; and especially when it is considered that every source of authentic information as to such cases, must have been open to those who wished to adduce them in their defence of the general system. But that slaves of any description, make savings and acquire property out of the *master's allowances of food or other necessaries*, was probably thought too bold a fiction; for I find it no where asserted by any of my opponents.

Some of my readers perhaps here may recollect the fabulous accounts they have seen of the wealth possessed by these poor beings, and the countenance that may seem to be given to such tales by the endeavours of his Majesty's government, in pursuance of the parliamentary resolutions to establish savings banks for the slaves in the different colonies, where they may deposit their money, and let it accumulate with interest for their future benefit; or as a fund for the purchase of their freedom. It may be remembered also that there has been strong opposition by the planters, now avowedly abetted by the West India committee, to the granting of a right of redemption, or what they call "compulsory manumission," on the alleged apprehension that the right would be exercised so extensively as often to deprive the planters of labourers whom they could not spare; and it may be thought, that such views and measures are hard to reconcile with the extreme parsimony on the master's part, and the great destitution and sufferings of the slaves which have been here developed and proved.

I acknowledge the apparent difficulty; but it arises, like every other which an advocate of colonial reformation has to encounter, from the general ignorance of the European public, our statesmen not excepted, and the gross misrepresentations of the West Indian party, as to the true nature of the case.

The statements that were made to parliament as to the wealth of plantation slaves by some of the colonial witnesses in 1790, were more extravagant if possible than the accounts of their labour and food. Fifty, a hundred, even two hundred and five hundred pounds sterling were spoken of by eminent

planters, as sums they had known to have been accumulated by negroes on their own estates; and those statements were generally so introduced as to imply, that they were fair indications of the condition in point of property of the plantation-slaves at large. One of the witnesses, the agent of Grenada and St. Kitts, in reply to the question, "Does it often happen "that negroes acquire and possess considerable property?" states as follows. "If 400*l.* or 500*l.* may be called consider-"able property, they sometimes possess that sum, but more "frequently the sum they possess does not exceed 200*l.* or "300*l.*," which would seem to imply that such sums were within the reach of the slaves generally. (*Privy Council Report, Grenada, &c.* A. No. 10, 11.)

It was not solely by invention or gross exaggeration, that such accounts were calculated to deceive; for one fallacy will be found to pervade them all. In every case distinctly stated, and therefore likely to have some foundation in truth, the usual artifice was practised of suppressing the all important distinction between the common drudges of the field, and those comparatively fortunate and highly privileged slaves who are not driven, but drive; or who have been taught mechanical arts for the purposes of the estate, and are known by the name of tradesmen or headmen. I have noticed before that the head negroes commonly receive double allowances from the master, and that the drivers have ample means of turning their powers of punishment to account at the expence of their hapless inferiors. As to the carpenters, coopers, masons, &c. they are sometimes able by working for their own benefit at times unoccupied by the master's service, to obtain money or other gainful rewards, especially when they are near to a town.

What would be thought of a man, who undertaking to inform the public in some foreign country of the condition of our labouring poor, should select examples of property acquired by carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and other artificers in some of our country towns, and urge them as evidence of the liberality of the wages that our agricultural labourers obtain? Certainly that he reasoned very idly, if the wide difference between the plowman's and mechanic's remuneration were known; but if unknown and suppressed by

him, very deceitfully too. Now in the parliamentary evidence, here referred to, the subject of enquiry was the state of plantation-slaves at large; but the specimens brought forward by the witnesses of considerable property acquired, were all taken from among the drivers and other headmen or tradesmen; and that important distinction was in almost every instance suppressed, until elicited on cross-examination by anti-slavery members of the committee.*

Yet even with all the advantages of that superior class, their possession of any property worth a boast by the master's must be extremely rare, for with a selection of willing witnesses from every colony, the specified cases were very few, commonly but one by each witness, and they were for the most part driven to admit that they knew of no more; for which two of them found a very convenient reason; namely that the negroes in general conceal their wealth.†

Of the existence of hidden riches, like the supposed stores of the alchymists, the belief is much easier than the proof or the refutation. In the few instances given there was ostentation rather than concealment on the part of the possessors, nor is it easy to conceive how a slave could invest his property so as to retain the command over it without his master's knowledge, and his assistance too. He might to be sure bury his

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* See, for instance, and compare, in the Commons Report of 1790, p. 187. with 201.; p. 105, 6. with 120.; p. 307. with 311.; p. 436. with 443. See also p. 93.

† Q. Have you known frequent instances of negroes being possessed of considerable property?

A. In a small Island like that on which I chiefly resided, it is not to be supposed that such instances should frequently occur. Besides negroes in general are very jealous of letting their owners or managers know what property they really do possess. Evidence of *Mr. Tobin* of St. Christopher and Nevis, Same Report, 278.

Q Can you speak particularly of the quantity of property possessed by any particular individual among the negroes?

A. In general, the negroes conceal their money and do not choose to be considered as rich. Evidence of *Mr. Franklyn*, who spoke of and had resided in all the Islands from Barbadoes to St. Christopher. Same Rep. 93. He mentioned the instance of Jeffery, a *carpenter*, whom he believed to have been worth six or seven hundred pounds, but though he said he believed many of the negroes to be possessed of a great deal of property, he could mention no other case.

money in the earth; but is under too much constant observation and restraint to make the practice common, without frequent detection. The discovery of a slave's buried treasure would be so happy a topic for slave masters, that it would have found a tongue in every West India circle, and a place in every West India testimony or pamphlet, had such a phenomenon occurred in any colony during the last forty years, or been handed down by older tradition; but no such discovery has ever been heard of in the course of this long controversy. I doubt very much, therefore, whether the head negroes or tradesmen, the only plantation-slaves who can often acquire a little property, are at all given to conceal it. From their general character, they are much more likely to spend it in dress, and other modes of self-indulgence; except the prudent and well principled few, who may save for a purpose that demands publicity, the purchase of liberty for themselves, their wives or children. Nevertheless as such laudable objects of saving and accumulation, may sometimes excite the industry, and favour the prudence, of individuals among the superior class of the plantation-slaves, and well disposed domestics, the institution of savings Banks was a measure properly included in the improvements, adopted or recommended by the crown.*

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* I confess that it was one which I did not regard with unmixed satisfaction, because it had an obvious tendency to countenance the misrepresentations I am now repelling, and favor the false views of slavery which its apologists propagate in this country, by raising a notion that slaves in general have property to save. I thought it on that account a device of the enemy; and ignorant as I still am who suggested the plan to Mr. Canning, have not yet relinquished that surmise. But it was not for the friends of the slaves to oppose a measure, the direct operation of which, as far as it might have any effect at all, was to promote their industry and welfare. Besides, it was probable that the result of such institutions would tend ultimately rather to dispel, than support delusion; by shewing that by this test, at least, the imposing statements as to the large amounts of slaves' property in general, received no confirmation. Such has been the event wherever Savings Banks have been formed; though it would have been much more instructive as evidence of the real case, if a discrimination had been made in the books of every bank between plantation and other slaves as depositors, and among plantation slaves, between the drivers and tradesmen on the one hand, and the common field negroes on the other. Under the latter description, I am confident

But the assemblies, for the most part, seem to have foreseen that these institutions would be like spies, to report the nakedness of the land, and discredit all their impostures, as to the wealth of their slaves. A more probable reason, at least, cannot be suggested, for their contumacious conduct in a particular in which compliance would, on their own principles, have cost them nothing.

The refusal of the council and assembly of St. Vincent was accompanied with a laboured apology, the modesty and sincerity of which place it quite on a par with the passages which I have cited from the same paper, as to the disuse of the cart-whip.* *" No one circumstance can possibly expose " the genuine ignorance of the party now interfering with the " slave laws, and regulations, more than the proposal for esta- " blishing savings banks for their property."*

This may be just for ought I know. If I am mistaken in the suspicion before noticed, the proposal most probably arose from great ignorance in its authors, as to the abject and destitute condition of the poor beings they meant to benefit; and Mr. Canning, I doubt not, adopted, if he did not devise the measure, under that ignorance; but I cannot call it *genuine.* It was not a natural blindness, but an artificial and spurious darkness, created by these honourable legislators themselves, and their fellow-labourers in other colonies, whose impostures had extinguished the light of truth so totally, as to make it credited that the slaves were rich. But the ignorance which they proceed to impute explicitly, is somewhat of a different

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that very few and insignificant, if any, deposits would have been found, even in the largest colonies. The want of such discrimination where the banks have been established by the King's authority, was probably an oversight, for which the friends of the slaves, and I among them, deserve to be censured; for I believe the defect has not hitherto been pointed out by us to any of His Majesty's Ministers. However, the omission of such distinctions is a point of very small moment; as in none of the colonies excepting Trinadad and Berbice, do any deposits whatever appear to have been made; and the number of depositors in both these colonies does not exceed ten or twelve. They were made chiefly either either by headmen among the Government slaves, or by women, the purity of whose means may be doubted. *Papers presented by command in* 1828, *under the heads Trinidad and Berbice.*

* See supra p. 197. to p. 204.

kind. "The negroes are generally intelligent, and they know "enough of calculation to prevent themselves being imposed "upon in the bargains they make; but their arithmetic has "not reached either simple or compound interest. Their ideas "of wealth do not go beyond personal possession. No miser of "any age or country ever knew more delight in hanging "over his hoards of money, than does the negro in handling "his little pouch of dollars or johannes. It would not be "gold or silver to him if he could not every day of his life "know and approach the place of its deposit."

After a sarcasm on Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Buxton, it is added, that the negroes "*not only conceal possession of money "from white persons, but generally from their nearest relatives "and friends.*"* This may remind us of Falstaff's rogues in Kendal green. But perhaps these gentlemen use divining rods.

Now if it be doubted, whether the whole of this was not mere grimace and artifice, to hide the true reasons of refusal; if this, I say, be doubted by any of my readers, merely because the paper comes from a dozen gentlemen or more forming the legislature of a slave colony and addressing the crown through their governor, let him turn back to my former remarks on the same document, and be satisfied.

It remains to notice the other difficulty that was suggested, that of explaining why, if the negroes in general are really destitute of property, planters should be so much alarmed as they appear to be, at what they call compulsory manumission, *i. e.* allowing the slaves to redeem themselves if they can, at a full price, with their own money?

It might be a sufficient explanation, perhaps, to say, that though common field-negroes very rarely, if ever, could avail themselves of such a privilege, some of the drivers and tradesmen occasionally might, and the planters have not untruly alleged, that the place of a useful man of that description might not always be easy to fill by purchase. As to the injustice and cruelty of making the merits and value of a servant rivets for his chains, they do not jar against the feelings of West India slave masters in general, sufficiently to make

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* Communication to Sir Charles Brisbane, &c. Governor of St. Vincent, and joint reply of the Council and Assembly, p. 35, 6.

them give up that objection. Moreover, it is felt by the colonial proprietors, that to admit this right of redemption, would be to recognize a principle; which, however narrow the immediate practical operation of the privilege may be, they much dislike, and regard with unreasonable fears. Mitigations of slavery they know how to deal with; especially while left to assemblies and West India juries; but the dissolution of the state itself, is quite another thing; and not self-interest only, but pride, revolts at the novelty of having the awful relation of master severed against their will. The command of another man's destiny for life, however terrible to the subject of such power, is palatable and self-exalting to its proud possessor. These are doubtless among the feelings and the motives which have actuated the West India committee, under its new Leader, in avowedly making common cause with the assemblies in opposing the right of redemption.

But the noble chairman and members, I doubt not, were urged to that harsh and illiberal course, chiefly by the influence of the resident planters; who again are pushed on by individuals of their own body, and by the cry of the lower whites in the colonies, excited in very many cases by feelings to which the noble Marquis and his colleagues may be strangers. A man must have lived in the West Indies, and not merely as a transient guest, to conceive and appreciate all the motives that may make slave-masters averse to compulsory manumission. Some of them, perhaps, may be guessed at, when I hint that irredeemable property in a female may be the only security against her infidelity in the mind of a jealous master; and that to set loose a tongue which is now tied both by terror and by law, might be very inconvenient to those to whose crimes its silence gives impunity, or whose reputation it has power to blast. It was a wise Roman law, that an enfranchised slave should not be heard as a witness to any fact which arose before his manumission.

The fear of vengeance, even, may sometimes make a master relentlessly averse to manumission, because it is by the servile condition of the dreaded enemy only, that he or she can certainly be kept at a distance, or otherwise effectually restrained. A gentlemen suspects that a female domestic, his property, is resolved to poison him: he determines, there-

fore, that she shall be sent to another island, and kept there in bondage till her death or his. Her husband, to save her from exile, and separation from her children, finds the means of offering to pay a very large price for her freedom, but it is refused: the most respectable mediation, from persons who have no doubt of her innocence, is fruitless; and the master, taking what he thinks the surest course, sells her for a small price to a resident of the island to which he sent her with a condition in the bill of sale, that she shall never be enfranchised, but that the property shall revert to him, and the price be forfeited, if ever she returns.*

It is plain, that to an owner under such circumstances, the right of redemption would be in a high degree formidable and odious: but there are various cases of much more frequent occurrence, that will amply account for the clamours raised in the West Indies against the measure in question, without supposing any sincere apprehension in the minds of the planters; that there is wealth enough among the slaves collectively, to make the redemption inconveniently large.

Such indeed might be the case if they, like the Grecian and Roman slaves, from whose case I have digressed, were able, by any possible self-denial, to save, from the subsistence allowed by their masters, the price of future freedom; but the fact is, as we might well infer from the frequency of self-redemption by such means in Greece and Rome, that their slaves were much more liberally maintained than those of English planters.

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* As this will serve for illustration of possible motives in a master's mind, though the case were quite imaginary, I cannot be required to prove that such a one ever existed; but it is a real case that came before the Court of King's Bench in St. Christopher, while I practised at the bar in that Island. The husband went to the foreign Island to which the woman had been sent (I think it was St. Eustatius) and induced the purchaser there to sell her to him by the temptation of a high price, then executed a manumission valid by the law of the place, with the proper testimonials of which she returned as a free women to St. Christopher. If there was any thing wrong in the stratagem, I must confess having shared the blame of it. The former master seized her as his slave and I obtained a habeas corpus, contending that the condition in the bill of sale was void in law, or avoided by the effect of the enfranchisement; and a majority of the judges being of that opinion, she was discharged.

More disect evidence of that fact may be adduced in respect of the Roman slaves at least, from the notices we find in classical writers, of their actual allowances of food, which appears to have been of two kinds; the monthly distribution of grain which was called *demensum*, and the diurnal rations, or *diariæ;* the former being the mode of feeding most in use, and universally so, I apprehend, among the agricultural or rural slaves, and the latter only among the town slaves or domestics.*

The *demensum* was so much the prevalent mode, that the term is commonly used by classical writers, as meaning generally a slave's allowance. It will be very interesting therefore, to ascertain, if we can, its ordinary amount; and there is little or no difficulty in this, except that the reduction of Roman into European measures, is a problem, in the solution of which, learned writers have differed much and very widely from each other.

The demensum was an allowance of wheat *or other grain*, consisting, according to the best authorities, of five *modii* per month to each slave; and to this, as appears from a well-known passage in Terence, some money was usually added; for he speaks of the receiving five modii and five denarii, as known characteristics of the servile condition.† One learned commentator has, on no apparent authority, reduced the allowance of grain from five modii to four,‡ but others have either adhered to the statement of five as the established usage, or regarded it as varying from four, or four and a half, to five, according to the produce of the annual crops, or the greater or less degree of liberality in the master. § We may therefore reasonably assume, that five modii were considered as the proper standard of allowance; and that when the quantity was

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* Cum servis urbana diaria rodere mavis. Hor. Epis. i. 14. 4.

† Servus est; quinque modios accipit, et quinque denarios. Terence in Phormio, 11, 9. Taking the denarius at 8¾*d.* sterling, its generally received value, the money allowance was 3*s.* 7¾*d.* per month.

‡ See Donatus on this passage of Terence.

§ Et hic erat menstruus canon, quatuor vel quinque modiorum in singulis. Laurentius Pignorius, de Servis. The same writer cites Cœlius Aurelianus, as saying, Sic demensum variavit aliquando, modo enim 4, modo 4½, modo 5 modiorum fuit, prout ferebant et annonæ ratio et dominorum qua splendor qua sordes.

lessened to four, or four and a half, it was regarded as a scantiness discreditable to the master, unless excused by a general scarcity or failure of the harvest.

What then were the contents of the modius, when reduced to our English cubical standard? Though commonly translated a bushel, it was, I admit, a measure of far less capacity than the one known to us by that name; though the degree of inferiority is a subject on which classical writers are much at variance with each other. If we refer to the word *modius* in Ainsworth, we shall find it estimated by him, when applied to the measurement of corn and like substances, at a peck and a half English; and he follows therein the learned Budæus, the first authority on such subjects. Dr. Adams, in his Roman Antiquities, says that "it was the third part of a cubic foot, "or somewhat more than a peck English." But for this he quotes no authority.

The Encyclopædia Britannica, in its comparative tables of Roman and English measures, follows Dr. Adams in all points; except in making the modius simply an English peck, omitting the "somewhat more."

If, amidst these variant estimates, I take the demensum at five modii, and the modius at a peck only, it will be at least sufficiently abstinent; and we shall have five pecks, or eighty pints of grain for the monthly allowance; being two pints and nearly two-thirds of a pint per diem, or about twenty pints per week. This is about three times the amount of the subsistence which I have shewn to be in the Leeward Islands that of the negro slave, when dependent for support on the master's allowances alone.

It should not, however, be supposed that the Roman slave had nothing beyond his demensum of corn; or no taste of humble luxuries at his meals. We have seen on the best classical authority (for such I may well call on a subject like this the traits of living manners, given by a dramatic poet for the ears of his cotemporaries) that to the five modii were added five denarii or Roman pence; which, as the denarius was equal to eight pence three farthings of our money, amounted to three shillings and seven pence three farthings; a sum exceeding five-fold the monthly cost of the negro's salt herrings. We have seen also that the Roman slaves had wine at their

meals, provided at the master's charge, and in very liberal quantities.* Oil, too, was among the luxuries of which they ordinarily partook.† On the whole, it is a fair and moderate estimate, that the treatment of the Roman slave, in point of subsistence, was three-fold better than that of the British colonial slave; while his labour, as there is every reason to believe, was very far less severe.

That his lot was thus enviably distinguished from that of the plantation negroes, might be satisfactorily inferred, even from the silence of classical authorities, as to oppressions like these; for though the satirists and moralists of Rome did not leave unnoticed in their works abuses of the master's power, and though the imperial codes contain many provisions to restrain them, I am not aware of a single passage in either, tending to shew that starving their slaves, or withholding from them adequate means of support, was an ordinary or known species of oppression. The same is the case as to an excessive and destructive exaction of labour. No Roman writer, I believe, has exposed any such avaricious excess; nor do the imperial ordinances or rescripts, among their provisions for the mitigations of slavery, and multitudinous notices of the state, contain any thing that indicates the prevalence of such an abuse. ‡ If the force of this inference is not felt, let the Code Noir of France, the Cedulas of the Spanish Government, as to its colonial slavery, the servile codes of the Danish West India Islands, and of our own, be consulted; and it will be found that the first, the anxious, and very difficult advance towards improvement in all, was to limit the labours, and enlarge the subsistence of the slaves; in other words, to curb, if possible, the oppressive avarice of the masters.

In fact, there were neither motives nor means with the landlords or farmers of Italy, for any degree of severity in these respects, at all approaching to that of our sugar colonies. The heavier labours of the field were all performed by horses,

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* See my former volume, p. 342, &c. and the authorities there cited.

† Cato de Re Rustica.

‡ If I am mistaken in these negative propositions, as I very possibly may, Mr. Barclay or some of his learned coadjutors will no doubt correct me, by citing any passages that recognize or point at either of those specific modes of oppression by the Roman masters.

oxen, and other working cattle, and by means of the plough, the wain or cart, the harrow, and other instruments of husbandry, like our own;* and much of the agricultural work that was left to human hands, not only will bear no comparison with the arduous toils of the cane-piece, but was probably lighter on the whole than that of our English peasants. Most of the various processes in the vineyards and olive-grounds, the management of bees, and the tending of sheep and cattle, in which no small proportion of the rural slaves in Italy were chiefly engaged, could not be labours of an arduous kind.

Nor were their hours of relaxation taxed with the charge of raising food for their own support. The Roman masters had not hit upon that ingenious invention reserved for our sugar planters, of adding the stimulus of hunger to that of the whip, by leaving hard-worked and weary men to provide for their own subsistence at intervals nominally left to them for refreshment or repose, and calling this "working for themselves." Their provisions, as we have seen, were raised or purchased by the master; and supplied regularly to the slaves, in such quantities as not only exempted them from hunger, but enabled them very often, by a sparing use of their food, to save the means of purchasing their own enfranchisement.

The latter well-attested fact would, if it stood alone, be enough for the purpose of these comparisons. It might serve to deprive the avaricious oppression of the sugar colonies of the oft-urged, though contemptible plea, that it once had an example in the Pagan world, of a system as opprobrious as its own.

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* It would be idle to quote authorities for facts like these, as no man at all acquainted with the Latin classics can be at a loss for them. As to the plough drawn by oxen, its use was so early general, that the word *jugerum*, the Roman acre, is thought to be derived from *jugum boum*, a yoke of oxen; being the supposed quantity of land that one yoke of oxen should plough up in a day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ALLOWANCE OF CLOTHING TO THE FIELD NEGROES BY THEIR OWNERS, IS ALSO IN A SHAMEFUL DEGREE PENURIOUS AND INSUFFICIENT.

In the testimony on the colonial side, before the privy council and parliamentary committees, it was strongly affirmed, as we have seen, not only that the slaves were abundantly fed, and moderately or very lightly worked, but also that they were sufficiently and properly clothed at the master's expence.

Some of the West India witnesses, indeed, qualified the last proposition by a reference to the climate; thereby making their standard of sufficiency very indefinite, though apparently meaning to admit, that the ordinary amount of clothing was not such as would suffice in this country. But others spoke without any such qualification; and if we refer to their evidence in the reports, they will be found for the most part to have stated the supply of clothing to be adequate, if not even liberal and redundant.*

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* It is due to Mr. *Brathwaite*, the then agent of *Barbadoes*, to notice that he spoke with more candour on this point, as we have seen he did in respect of food, than most of his copartizans. "Taking the island "throughout, I do not upon the whole, think they are sufficiently clothed; "but in a hot climate, I do not think this a point of much importance." (*Privy Council Report Barbadoes*, Q. A. No. 6.)

The *Agents for Antigua* were also, in their answer to this query, pretty moderate. "Slaves are allowed every year a blanket and a quantity of "Osnaburghs, and coarse woollens for making themselves clothing; little "clothing being thought requisite in a West India climate," and Dr. Adair in respect of the same island, was content to say, "In general the clothing "is sufficient to preserve them from the inclemency of the season; but I

Fortunately, however, for the cause of truth, several of the examinants were led into specifications and details, as to the kinds and quantities of clothing annually supplied; and by these we are enabled to judge what their standard of sufficiency actually was; for in their respective accounts of particulars, numerous though they were, we shall find but little diversity.

It appears from them that the proprietors, with the exception of some who are too indigent or penurious to have regular yearly supplies of clothing from this country, distribute to their slaves one suit per annum, or else the materials for making it; in general only the latter; and that it consists of the following articles: — To the men, a short jacket of coarse and flimsy woollen, called *baize* or *bamboo*, and breeches or trowsers of Osnaburg, or other coarse linen; and

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" think there are some instances in which the masters are too sparing." (Ibid. same query.)

Not so, the Council and Assembly of the island; for they said " In " damp and low situations, they are clothed with woollen clothes, and in " dry situations with a lighter stuff called Osnaburghs. Such is the prac- " tice. No laws have ever been passed in this island for enforcing due " care of the slaves, as from the humanity exercised towards them by " their owners, it has never been found necessary to pass a law for that " purpose." (Ibid.)

The *Council and Assembly of St. Christopher*, and several other respondents, had recourse to the old distinction between " *well-disposed*" and " *ill-disposed*," i. e. able, and weakly slaves. "Good well-disposed negroes " are in respect of clothing, as they are in respect of food: they have al- " ways plenty. A bad ill-disposed negro, were you to give him a ward- " robe every week, would soon make away with them." (Ibid. title Grenada and St. Christopher).

" In general the negroes in *Jamaica*," said the agent of that island and his joint respondents, *Messrs. Long* and *Chisholme* " are *well clothed*, and " there are very few sugar estates where the negroes do not from their " own private earnings provide themselves with extra clothes for Sun- " days and holidays." (Ibid. title Jamaica.)

Q. By the Committee of the House of Commons to *James Baillie, Esquire*. " In general is there a sufficient supply of food and clothing for " negro slaves." A. " *I have always found the greatest abundance in all* " *the islands I have been in.*" (Commons Report of 1790, p. 187.)

After citing so full and comprehensive an answer from this very eminent West India merchant and planter, it would be a useless trespass on the reader's time, to shew by how many other proprietors of different colonies, the sufficiency of clothing was affirmed.

sometimes, not always, a coarse worsted cap or hat. To the women, a short jacket or wrapper, and a petticoat of the same linen, and a like quantity of the baize or bamboo for a jacket.*

Such was, and still is, the scanty yearly supply in the Leeward Islands. Their meliorating act of 1798, recently re-enacted in St. Christopher, seemed to provide a small increase, by enacting that owners should give *twice in the year*, one jacket made of woollen cloth, and one pair of trowsers of Osnaburghs to the male slaves, and one wrapper of woollen cloth and one petticoat to the females. But it is provided, that if any owner should think proper to furnish the slave with a good and sufficient blanket, and a hat or cap, the same should be in lieu of one suit of such clothes.† This, it will be seen, would make little or no difference in the slave's favour, compared with the former practice as here stated. He must lose the blanket, and cap or hat, to get a second annual suit of the rest; and the linen jackets are omitted. The legislators nevertheless discovered their consciousness that many masters were likely to withhold even these scanty allowances; for a section follows, requiring them under a penalty of 100l., to declare annually

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* "They have as much Osnaburghs or coarse linen as make a jacket "and breeches for the men, and a jacket and petticoat for the women; "with an allowance of woollen cloth, and generally hats or caps, at least "once a year." (Evidence of *Mr. Tobin*, Commons Report of 1790, p. 263.)

"All such estates as have a credit in England, usually have sent to "them a sufficient quantity of coarse baize, and also a sufficient quantity "of coarse linen called Osnaburghs, and many of them have warm worsted "caps also, sent out to them, and proper hats for their watchmen. To "each negro man is given a quantity of baize sufficient to make him a "blanket or covering, and also as much of the Osnaburghs as will make "him a short jacket and trowsers; and to each female as much as will "make a short wrapper and petticoat, with also a sufficient quantity of "the baize for the purpose before specified." (Evidence of *Mr. Thomas*, Ibid. p. 249.)

"They are clothed annually; the master gives them a hat, a frock and "trowsers, or shift and petticoat, a woollen jacket and a blanket." (Evidence of Mr. Robinson of Dominica, P. C. Report, Q. A. No. 6.)

It is needless to quote other accounts, for their specifications are all nearly in the same words, and all to the same effect.

† See the act before cited, sect. 7.

on oath before the chief courts of the Islands, that such clothing had been furnished to their slaves. But the act in this, as in other parts, was a dead letter. It has been ascertained by official returns, that no such oaths have been made, and no prosecutions instituted for default of them.*

No other act of assembly has, in these islands, or any other sugar colony to my knowledge, provided any express regulations whatever on this subject; for such surely I need not call enactments, that "every owner shall annually allow and give "to his slaves *decent and sufficient clothing*,"† or "shall give "them *good and sufficient clothing*,"‡ or "shall once in every "year give them *proper and sufficient clothing*, to be approved of "by the justices and vestry of the parish." § The Jamaica legislature indeed, has added that the owner or master "shall an-"nually give in an account on oath, of the nature and quantity "of clothing *actually served to each slave on the plantation*, to "the justices and vestry" under the penalty of 100*l.*; and the Grenada Act had a similar provision, with reference to its boasted but soon abandoned institution, the public guardians

* In the Danish island of Santa Cruz, also, this subject has been regulated by law, and the author before cited, in his account printed but a few months ago, says, "The legal annual allowance of clothing for each man is "seven yards of Osnaburgh, which will make a shirt and a pair of trowsers; "and three and a half yards of a coarse kind of woollen cloth, called bam-"boo, which is usually made into a coat or cloak. The allowance for the "women is the same, except that they have an additional yard of Osna-"burgh; and the children receive a quantity proportioned to their size. "Each man and woman receives a blanket every two years." (Observation on the State of Negro Slavery, &c. p. 16.)

We have here a new specimen of the close similarity, not to say absolute identity, between the œconomies of foreign planters and our own; the effect, as I have before observed, of a uniformity of the sordid and oppressive principles on which their common system is built.

The author says (p. 15), that the negroes of Santa Cruz are as well clothed as any that he saw in the six other colonies he visited (which I understand to have comprised several of our Leeward Islands); and he might have added, that their allowance of clothing from their masters was nearly in quality and quantity the same, being the very cheapest and least that, without reducing the poor slaves to absolute nudity, it was possible for avarice to adopt.

† Grenada Act of 1798, sect. 3.

‡ Dominica Act of 1799, sect. 1.

§ Last Jamaica Consolidation Act of 1816, sect. 7.

of slaves. It could hardly be supposed that such enactments were designed to have any operation, *except in England*, even if we had no proof to the contrary; but in answer to official enquiries it has appeared, that no such returns in either colony were ever made, and that no prosecution for omitting them ever took place.

The existing practice, as to clothing, is not better in this respect in the sugar colonies at large, than it was described to be forty years ago by the colonial witnesses here cited, as may certainly be inferred from the statements of some of my opponents, and the very observable silence of others.

The report of the council of *Barbadoes*, of 1823, is the only public document within my knowledge from any part of the West Indies, that contains any specific information equally recent on this subject, and we are told in it, "that the cloth-"ing for every man, is a Pennistone jacket, an Osnaburgh "shirt and trowsers, and a woollen cap or hat. The women "have a full-sized jacket of Pennistone, an Osnaburgh petti-"coat, a handkerchief, and a woollen cap or hat. On *some* "*estates* they have a check chemise besides; and the children "besides, have an annual suit."* (The Pennistone is the same kind of coarse flimsy woollen with the bamboo or baize.)

The *Jamaica* examinations of 1815, are strikingly defective in this respect; since it was a standing interrogatory by the examiners to the old planters, what improvements had taken place within their recollection, in respect of clothing, as well as labour, &c. and though the several examinants enter into some specifications as to other particulars, they give none at all as to past or present allowances *of clothes*. They either leave that article wholly unnoticed, or say that they *believe* there has been some improvement in that respect; or at most, assert in the vaguest general terms, that there has been such an improvement since they first knew the island; without venturing to specify in what it consists. †

But here my antagonist, Barclay, ventures to supply the defect; for in his strictures on the Rev. Mr. Bickell's work, he

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* See the printed Report before referred to, p. 107.

† See the Report of these examinations at large, printed for Richardson in 1816, and entitled "Further Proceedings of the Assembly of "Jamaica."

extracts some passages, in which that gentleman states the allowances of clothing in Jamaica; and by his reply to them, manifestly admits enough to show that the practice is no better there at this time, than we have seen it to be, and to have been forty years ago, in other colonies.*

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* Practical Views, &c. p. 434 to 437. The following are the extracts from Mr. Bickell, as they stand in Mr. Barclay's pages: "The more "common clothing for men and women is coarse blue baize, and coarse "Osnaburghs, with coarse hats and woollen caps. Of the baize enough is "given to the men for a surtout, and to the women for a petticoat, of the "Osnaburghs enough for two shirts and two pair of trowsers to the men, "and for two shifts and a petticoat or two for the women. They "generally make them up themselves: they have also a man's hat each, "of very inferior quality, with one or two woollen caps. This is generally "served out once a year."

Again, (in a contrast between the clothing of English peasants and that of the negroes) Mr. Bickell is cited as saying; "but what has the "slave? He has for his best, from his master, as I before observed, a "large baize surtout, which hangs about him like a sack, and would as "well fit any man you please as himself; and moreover, a pair of coarse "trowsers, and coarse shirt of Osnaburghs, which, with the coarsest kind "of hat, is his sole wardrobe; for this is the general livery or badge of "slavery. The negro women are clothed as much inferior to our poor "women; and both negro men and negro women are without stockings "or shoes, and generally go in a half-dressed state, viz. without coats or "gowns, the women's petticoats up to their knees; and very often before "fresh supplies are given out, many of them are in a very ragged state "and some almost in a state of nudity."

Such, so far as Mr. Barclay found it convenient to cite it, was Mr. Bickell's account of the clothing: and this is Mr. Barclay's reply: "Mr. "Bickell, I presume, had not heard or been informed, that in addition to "the articles he enumerates, it is common, at least on many plantations, "to give the negroes an allowance of linen check, and on all a cotton "handkerchief to each slave, with thread, needles, &c. How a woman "receiving so large an allowance as he states of coarse strong clothing, "three suits yearly, can yet before fresh supplies be given out, be in a "state of nudity, I am at a loss to conjecture; as also why a negro, as he "makes up his own clothes, should make his surtout to hang about him "like a sack. *But the greatest hardship of all is, that the negroes working "under a vertical sun, should go in a half dressed state, without coats or "gowns or shoes and stockings.*"

My readers here, I trust, will not overlook the artful and evasive style of this commentator; his assuming the fact of additions on many plantations, for which there is no authority but his own; his converting *two very imperfect suits* into *three entire ones*; or his dextrous insinuation that the semi-nudity of the slaves, and the want of shoes and stockings are matter

If the utter insufficiency of such supplies can be doubted, we may here, as usual, find a very authoritative judgment on this point in the instructive volume of Dr. Collins. He is silent indeed as to any allowances of clothing, except the bamboo or woollen cloth variously formed into a coat or jacket, or a loose cloak or wrapper, both by males and females; and he speaks of this, as if it were the only article of clothing allowed by the master, or which he deemed of any importance. He says, "The customary allowance of negro clothing has gene-
" rally been *two yards and a quarter, or two yards and a half*
" *of a coarse woollen stuff*, known in many of the islands by
" the name of *bamboo*, to grown negroes; and less in proportion
" to smaller ones. If they had more, it was usually purchased
" with their own money; which many of them were well able
" to effect. Within these few years however, a more liberal
" treatment hath begun to prevail in that respect, as in others,
" with regard to negroes, though there are at present but too
" many who adhere to their former penurious regimen." *
" Negroes," he adds, " who have only a bamboo such as I
" have described, are under the necessity of making use of it
" on all occasions. During the day, when the sun shines with
" intemperate ardour, it is wrapped about their loins, which it
" relaxes and enfeebles; when the rain falls, it is extended
" over their heads and the upper part of their bodies, where
" like a sponge it imbibes and retains the moisture, the greater
" part of the day: At night, when the negroes retire from
" labour to their repose, the same bamboo retaining the

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of choice with them, rather than hardships. On the latter points I shall soon have to shew the cruelty of the practice, and the unfeeling sophistry of the defence. But what I cite him here for, is to shew his virtual admission of all the facts material to support my last proposition in the text, as to the practice in Jamaica. It is not denied that the men have but one coat of baize, here called a surtout, and the women neither coats nor gowns, and if the women can make two petticoats out of their allowance of Osnaburghs, it is, we see, by so shortening them that they reach only to the knees.

* Practical Rules, p. 121.

Let it be observed that this was written ten years at least after most of the testimonies I have cited, which affirmed in strong general terms the sufficiency or abundance of clothing; and as long after all those to which I have here conformed in stating the particulars.

"contents which it had absorbed in the course of the day, is "resorted to as a defence against the cold, or the attacks of "the musquitoes, and covers them when they sleep. From "such a situation we may naturally infer that the health of "your negroes will suffer," &c.—"Fluxes are the frequent "consequence, and what *they are* we all know; as well as that "negroes are more afflicted with them than the whites; an "effect undoubtedly owing to the want of something to defend "them from the inclemencies of the air during the hours of "sleep."

After some further reasoning to this effect, he concludes, "there is the greatest reason to believe, that many diseases "are induced, and of course some lives lost, by a neglect of "the article of clothing."*

I need scarcely attempt to fortify this judgment of so very eminent and long experienced a planter and medical practitioner; but if it be true that cleanliness conduces much to health, and the want of it to sickness, there are some further remarks which should not be omitted.

Imagination cannot well conceive any thing more filthy and offensive than the woollen garment, which, as a wrapper by day and a blanket by night, has covered the naked body of a working negro in the West Indies for a year, or for as many successive months as its rags can be made to hang together; often clinging to his skin during his mid-day labours, when the perspiration is so profuse, that our author elsewhere describes it in the strong language of "*descending in torrents*" from his frame. The effluvia from a gang of slaves, when a man is near to them, are too strong for any nostrils, unhabituated to this nuisance, easily to sustain. The disgust, it may be added, which this and other circumstances, incident to their wretched want of clothing, excite, tends naturally to augment the personal contempt and antipathy to these degraded beings; the sad effects of which they, in a multitude of ways, experience.

Dr. Collins also shews, that to the feelings of the negroes, as well as to their health, the same sordid deficiency is in no

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* Ibid. 121, 2, 3.

slight degree annoying. "That negroes are particularly sen-
" sible of the cold, and impatient under a very moderate de-
" gree of it, we may be convinced, by observing them when
" they crawl out of their huts in the morning, torpid and
" shivering, and incapable of exertion, until warmed and in-
" vigorated by the influence of the ascending sun. It is then
" that they stand peculiarly in need of clothing, and a warm
" jacket is less an object of luxury than of prime necessity."*

Here we have an answer to those gentlemen who excused the scanty allowances of clothing by the warmth of the climate. Here, also, we may learn to appreciate the candour and humanity of Mr. Barclay, who, though by his own account of himself, an experienced planter, affects to ridicule, on the same ground, the considering the want of coats, gowns, shoes, and stockings, as a hardship.

If the health or comfort of the slaves were in a tolerable degree attended to, they ought, in fact, to have a larger, instead of a much less supply of clothing than country labourers in England. They should have warm woollen suits of garments to protect them from chill when turned out in the morning, and during their nocturnal watches; and changes of linen, or cotton garments, for the sake of cleanliness and decency, during their mid-day labours in the field.

Dr. C., however, knew too well the rigid economy inherent in the sugar planting system, to venture on prescribing such costly improvements as these on the general practice. The improvements he does recommend, under this head, will at once shew, that he was a sufficiently abstinent reformer; and that in the accounts I have adopted, as to the ordinary allowances, more than ample justice has been done to the planters. His advice is to give, instead of the bamboo wrapper, which, having little breadth, is ill adapted to cover the body, either in the day or night, " a pair of small warm white blankets, of
" low price, or one large one, to serve for three or four years
" as a night covering, not to be taken out of the house; and
" for the day, a strong woollen jacket, like that worn by
" sailors, of the value of about six or seven shillings, every

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* Ibid. 123.

" year, with a Dutch cap or coarse hat, and two pair of " trowsers or petticoats according to the sex; *all which*," he adds, " *would not cost more than eighteen or twenty shillings* " *sterling.*"

" Some persons," he says, " *instead of a jacket* give shirts, " of Osnaburghs, checks, or some other coarse linen;" but such a substitute for the jacket he condemns, as not defending the body from cold, and for other reasons; adding, however, that " the shirts are not to be proscribed altogether, *for they who* " *are willing to incur the expense, may be indulged in it, and de-* " *serve praise for their liberality.*"* The liberality of not leaving these poor creatures, as usual, without a shirt to their backs!!! Who, but a West India slave-master, would not regard such praise as an ironical affront? But Dr. C. knew full well the class of men he was addressing. He ventures, however, to advise, that the negro clothing should be sent from this country ready made, or made into garments on the plantation before it is delivered to the slaves, instead of giving out the materials only, which, he says, many planters do. We have seen that they still do so, at least in Jamaica; and Dr. C. points out consequences of the niggardly expedient, more serious than the comfortless and awkward ill-fitting of the clothes, which excited derision from Mr. Barclay; observing, that " the poor " and improvident part of the gang, being neither able to do " the work themselves, nor to pay for its being done by others, " commonly dispose of the materials for a trifle, *and go about* " *naked throughout the year; their midities only being half con-* " *cealed by rags;*"†

My readers will probably think with me, that a sale of the clothes is not necessary to explain these appearances, at least during great part of the year, when they regard the quality and quantity of the materials allowed; viz. two or three yards of a flimsy woollen, too narrow to wrap round the body without a seam, to serve a full grown man for a year, as his only covering at night, and his only upper garment by day.‡ But how happens it that these rags never met the eyes of those witnesses whom the colonists have brought for-

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* Ibid, 126.

† Practical Rules, 124 to 127.

‡ Ibid. 121 to 124, &c.

ward at different times to prove that their slaves are decently, comfortably, and abundantly clothed, without notice of such very common exceptions?

Our author further recommends, that in giving the materials only, which he seems to admit may be safe with the *more sensible negroes*, "there should be added to the cloth, thread, tape, and buttons, which, purchased at the stores on the spot, are very expensive." We find, therefore, that even these essential articles are not within the scope of the sugar planter's ordinary liberality. The poor slaves must buy them for himself; and doubtless, also, needles and scissors, and the other necessary implements of a tailor's calling; or manage without them how he can. Really, if under such circumstances, he makes botching work of his new trade, and forms, according to Mr. Bickell's description, something more like an open sack, than a jacket or surtout that fits him, the sarcasm of Mr. Barclay will hardly turn our pity into contempt; nor shall we harshly condemn the poor fellow, if to escape from the difficulty and expense, and to save time he can very ill spare, he sells the allowance of bamboo, that might very scantily and comfortlessly clothe him.

Should the reader be desirous to know what is the value of all this pitiful excess of pinching parsimony to the planter, the same instructive guide will enable me to gratify his curiosity. "There is (says Dr. C.) an advantage in sending the "unwrought materials, arising from the bounty of two pence "a yard on the exportation of British manufactures of that "quality;" which, he adds, "will nearly pay for the labour "of working them up into clothing:"* i. e. if the planter will employ, as he recommends, the sempstresses on the estate for the purpose. Now, this bounty on two and a quarter yards of bamboo amounts just to four pence halfpenny; but the planter finds a better course, than that of giving up to his slaves, what he has received at their expence from the people of England, by sending their clothes unmade. He casts the burthen of making them upon the poor slaves themselves, to whom the thread, tape, and buttons, &c. must cost a much larger sum; and puts the four pence halfpenny in his pocket.

* P. 127.

Mr. Barclay, indeed, tells us that "*on many plantations* "*the master gives thread, needles, &c.*" Be it so; though we have only *his* word for it. Then, on *some plantations*, the master, perhaps, gives up the odd halfpenny to the slave, retaining a groat only of the bounty to himself; while on other, and most plantations, he pockets the whole of that *important* saving, and finds it a satisfactory compensation for seeing his slaves with their scanty clothes ill-made or in rags. Such facts, though minute, are important, as exemplifying the general spirit of sordid parsimony which pervades the oppressive system in all its details.

On considering what Dr. Collins stated, as to the actual allowances of clothing, and the very scanty improvements he ventured to recommend, we might suppose him not misinformed as to the commencement of a more liberal treatment than that which he describes and condemns, without much improving our general views of the case. But the more liberal treatment in this respect, which he spoke of as having begun to prevail, must have been, like several other incipient improvements, with the suggestion of which he attempted to conciliate his brethren, either purely ideal, or very short-lived, as well as extremely partial; for I can venture to assert that the annual supplies of clothing are not at this day, generally speaking, materially, if at all better, than those which he condemned. I assert it with the more confidence, because if the evidence I have adduced is not satisfactory, the planters have easy and decisive means of proving the true facts of the case. All their supplies of clothing are sent from this country. Let them produce, then, their invoices or the accounts of their merchants, containing the quantities of clothing shipped annually for the use of their estates; and shew from them, compared with the numbers of their slaves, whether the allowances of clothes to each were greater than we have seen them to have been forty years ago.

Those to whom this subject is new, and still more those who have heard the condition of the poor slaves compared, to its advantage, with those of our well clad peasants, may be apt to exclaim, on reading the details I have given, "Surely these "enumerations of the poor negro's habiliments must be in-„complete! Where is the *change of garments*, or the Sun-

" day's dress, for church going? Where is the smock-frock, " or great coat, or the female gowns and cloaks? You must " have forgot, at least, the shifts, shirts, and neckcloths, and, " above all, the *stockings and shoes !*"

But, perhaps, it may be thought these things are less desirable, or less necessary to the slave than to the freeman; or in the West Indies than here. No such defence, I lament to say, can be offered for the want of any one of them; and yet all are certainly wanting. Even the smock-frock or cloak would often be a great comfort and benefit to the poor slave, or Dr. Collins was mistaken; for, in addition to the passages I have cited, he shews in other places, that chills from the night air, and from the sudden and heavy showers to which the slaves are exposed in the field, are frequent causes of disease among them. An outer garment, therefore, for occasional use would clearly be not less desirable for them than for our peasants.

As to the other desiderata here mentioned, the English labourer might dispense with them better than the negro slave; for in a hot climate, cleanliness is obviously more important to comfort and health than in a cold one; and no free man in the West Indies, whether white or black, or however poor, nor even any domestic slave, is unprovided with a change of washing garments.

The admitted *universal destitution of shoes*, deserves more particular remarks. A planter would as soon think of giving them to his sheep or dogs, as to his field negroes. Mr. Barclay, we have seen, affects to ridicule the treating the want of shoes as a hardship; and yet it may truly be affirmed, that there is no article, the want of which is a more frequent source of suffering and distress to these hapless fellow-beings. Their feet are peculiarly exposed to external injuries in the dust of their burning soils, from insects which penetrate the skin, and from the formidable thorns of the *cactus* or prickly pear, by a fence of which the cane pieces are usually bordered; and from other thorny shrubs and trees which abound in that climate. They suffer also in Trinidad, and other new colonies, and in a greater degree, by the frequent collisions of their naked feet with the stumps and roots of hardwood trees, and thorny brushwood, which they have to clear away or pass through.

In Trinidad, especially, I have heard of instances in which a large proportion of the entire gang has been disabled by ulcers arising from those causes. But even in the oldest and best cleared islands, the loss of toes, from external injuries, is so frequent, that judging by what I have seen in St. Christopher, I verily believe and will hazard the assertion, that no large gang could be turned out and inspected, in which individuals so dismembered would not be found.

But it is not on my own credit, or that of any fellow-labourer, that I desire any fact may be taken. Let me extract, therefore, the following further passages from Dr. Collins.

" As much of the service of negroes is lost to the planta-
" tion by their sores, as by all their other complaints put to-
" gether; *and this is unavoidable, from the exposed state of*
" *their extremities. A negro moves with his naked feet at all*
" *hours of the day or night, with a careless step, as if he were*
" *under the protection of shoes; no wonder then if they should*
" *suffer by accidents. Sometimes the toe encounters a stone,*
" *which deprives it of a nail in an instant; sometimes a piece of*
" *glass cuts deep into the foot; or a thorn penetrates to the bone.*
" *These are casualties that must necessarily be numerous.*"*

After prescribing the proper methods of treatment in such cases, the Doctor adds, " Newly imported negroes have a
" strong disposition to ulcerate on the slightest injury to their
" legs or feet, &c. But if negroes newly imported, even into
" a dry and healthy island, be subject to ulcerate on slight
" injuries, they are much more so when removed to is-
" lands where, from the abundance of wood, there is a great
" quantity of rain; or where they are attached to new settle-
" ments, and much employed in cutting down trees and the
" clearing of land. *In such circumstances, many lives are lost,*
" *merely by ulcers originating from injuries; no greater per-*
" *haps than chigoes, (a small insect that penetrates and breeds in*
" *the foot) but aggravated by the putrid disposition of the tu-*
" *mours, into the most horrid ulcers, which nothing can resist or*
" *remedy; for they continue their ravages on the limb, eating the*
" *flesh away from the bones, one toe dropping off after another,*

* Practical Rules, 436, 7.

*" until the whole foot, and probably life itself, yields to the dis-
" ease. Nor are these unfortunate cases very rare, though the
" issue may not be quite so fatal; for on estates lately settled, it
" is not unusual to have a third, or a half of the negroes confined
" to the house by sores, or working in the fields with bandages
" about their legs," &c. " It is, indeed, a melancholy prospect
" to a planter in the commencement of his settlement when his
" means are few, and his wants urgent, to have his progress re-
" tarded by the large proportion of negroes that will be disabled
" in that way."* *

May these passages meet the eye of some of those well-meaning, but grossly deluded public characters, who were induced to advocate the removal of slaves to new settled colonies, as a *change for their own benefit.*

Other, and still more terrible consequences, are sometimes felt by the poor negroes from the want of any protection to their feet. The cramp, tetanus, or locked-jaw, the most excruciating disease perhaps to which the human frame is liable, and which commonly ends in a too tardy death, is more often produced by a puncture or other slight wound, or even bruise in the foot, than any other cause.† From the great frequency of such accidents, that terrible effect would probably be much more common than it is, if the negroes had not learnt, from experience, the good, though rather painful precautions, of burning the wounded part with ardent spirits or beating it if on the soal of the foot, with a shingle or other piece of wood, long enough to produce inflammation. It is, nevertheless, by no means uncommon to hear of slaves being lost in that dreadful way; and from such slight hurts in the feet as shoes would have prevented.

" Surely," some readers may exclaim, " Dr. Collins, while " stating such cruel consequences of the *want of shoes*, did " not omit to recommend the use of them?" Yes, I must answer, he did; but doubtless, because he well knew such a recommendation would be vain. To raise the allowances, even in such a small degree, that the whole expence of clothing should not, by his estimate, exceed eighteen or twenty

* Ibid. 442, 3.

† See Practical Rules, title Locked Jaw, 359 to 363.

shillings sterling per annum, for each adult slave, was evidently, in his judgment, no easy work, from the anxious strain of advice addressed to the planter's feelings and self-interest by which he laboured to recommend it; but to *give shoes* to the gang, would alone, probably, more than double that entire expence. Neither he nor any other planter, however liberal, ever thought of such a costly innovation. No colonial witness or writer, to my knowledge, not even Mr. James M'Queen, has been bold enough to assert, that shoes have ever constituted, any where, an item of plantation supplies for the slaves;* and if so gross a falsehood should be advanced, official returns of the exports from this country would clearly demonstrate its falsehood.

Even Mr. Barclay, as we have seen, admits the fact, that the poor slaves are wholly destitute of stockings and shoes; replying to the charge only by deriding it as a subject of complaint on behalf of "*negroes working under a vertical sun,*" as if the only use of shoes were to protect the feet from cold.

It is thus that he, or rather the noble and honorable slave proprietors who have suborned and given currency to his impostures, continually play upon the ignorance and credulity of the European public. Who can read the extracts I have last made from Dr. Collins without being shocked at finding an article of parsimony, pregnant with such cruel consequences as he describes, treated with unfeeling levity, or justified by mean evasion.

And here let me remark what ought to have been earlier noticed, that these apologists are so far from venturing to

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* The following extract from the answer of the Council and Assembly of St. Christopher to the Privy Council enquiries, will hardly be thought an exception; and I know of no other in which shoes are mentioned at all. "Their clothing consists of blanketing, Osnaburgh, check, Hol-" land, coarse linen, caps, and watchcoats. On *some estates* hats and " shoes are added for *the principal negroes,*" i. e. the drivers and sugar boilers, &c. who need them least. But if even these ever experience such liberality from the master, it must be very rare. Dr. Collins recommends giving to these superiors of the gang a few articles of clothing not assigned to the vulgar herd, such as a couple of shirts of Dowlas or Irish linen, and a hat of somewhat superior quality (p. 129), but not a word even on *their* behalf, as to stockings or shoes.

quarrel with that important work of Dr. Collins, or dispute its very authoritative statements, though condemnatory of their cruel system in almost every page, that while they generally observe a prudent silence whenever it is quoted against them, the editors of the work called Mr. Barclay's, with a refined hypocrisy, affect to speak of Dr. Collins in terms of great applause, call his work "an excellent one," take credit to their party for its republication by Mr. Hibbert, and tell us "*that* "*it is in the hands of every intelligent overseer in Jamaica, and* "*highly valued by them as a guide.** They only desire us to believe that his censures, which they confess "*to have been* "*too well merited,*" have had the right effect, and that "*though there may be enough to find fault with yet,*" the abuses he pointed out have been, for the most part, reformed. I demand, in what single particular they have been so? I have already proved, from the latest public authorities on their own side of the controversy, that every avaricious abuse for which I have cited his work, is still in general practice. Let them instance one that is not so. Certainly it will not be found in the article of clothing; and as it is admitted that their slaves still go barefoot, by what physical changes can the cruel consequences have ceased?

The free negroes of Hayti, whose condition my opponents labour very hard to disparage, form in this point, as in all others, a contrast to their enslaved brethren. I cited in a former work, a public official table of exports from New York alone, to that island, for a single year, containing 60,000 pairs of shoes. Besides which, shoes, as I have been credibly informed, are now largely manufactured in Hayti itself.

As to our English country labourers, with whom my opponents have the assurance to compare their filthy, half-naked, and unshod drudges, I doubt not, that their annual expenditure, in this single article of shoes alone, equals or exceeds the whole expence of all the clothing collectively given to a plantation slave.

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* Barclay, 301.

CHAPTER X.

THE SLAVES ARE ALSO VERY BADLY LODGED.

That men who are thus inadequately fed and clothed are not less penuriously dealt with in other respects, may be easily believed. That they are better *lodged*, however, might perhaps be surmised; because it is admitted on all hands that their huts are for the most part built by themselves; and I could cite many inviting accounts given by their masters, both of their houses and furniture, in which, with the usual craft of my opponents, they ascribe to the poor field-negroes in general, what is partially true only of the drivers and other head men.

But here again Dr. Collins is an instructive guide, "Our "dwellings, he says, are inaccessible both to rain and wind. "But the huts of negroes which imperfectly possess the former "advantage, are totally destitute of the latter; every agitation "of the air being felt in them, and that with an effect pro- "portioned to the state of the body when exposed to its cur- "rent." This too he considers as a frequent cause of sickness; and exhorts their masters to assist them in building better habitations. As to furniture, he says, "It is proper to give "them something to sleep upon, that they may be kept from "the ground. At present a board is sometimes given to them "for that purpose, and sometimes not. Instead of it I would "recommend a bedstead, composed of boards six feet four "inches long, and three or four wide, planed on one side, and "supported at the distance of eighteen inches from the "ground," &c.

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* P. 132, 3.

Here, as usual, he feared to alarm the rigid economy of the masters; and therefore added, "of these bedsteads, an in- "different plantation carpenter will make three in a day, "and the cost of each, in boards, nails, and labour, will not "be more than ten or twelve shillings." "The negroes," he further observes, "are accustomed to hard lodgings; yet to "render them more comfortable, and to prevent the flesh being "annoyed in the conflict between the bones and the boards, "they may be covered with banana mats, preferably to pads "made with the leaves." *

Such is the lodging, which like the food and labour, so many respectable witnesses pronounced to be proper, liberal, and superior to that of the peasantry, or the lower class of people of every description, in this country. A hut that is weather proof, and a board with a coarse mat to receive the negro's weary limbs by night, are recommended as important improvements; though here, to say of a poor man that "*he has "not a bed to lie upon*" is thought a very moving image of distress.

In this particular, the errors of strangers or transient guests, in their accounts of the West Indies, may be easily produced by what I have reason to believe is a very ordinary imposition. If on visiting a planter they shew any curiosity to see the huts of the slaves, commonly called the negro-houses, they are conducted by their entertainer, to two or three in the group which are the habitations of the drivers, carpenters, masons, or other tradesmen, the chiefs of the gang, whose many comparative advantages I have frequently noticed; and in these, though on a cursory outside view not very distinguishable from the other negro huts, the strangers may find appearances of humble comfort both as to the dwelling and its furniture; which they are naturally led to regard as fair examples of the general case; though the huts of the common drudges, which it would be rudely prying to enter, would excite only compassion and disgust.

It may be supposed, too, by such transient observers, that every slave has his or her separate hut, or has no other inmates than a husband or wife and children; but this would be

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* P. 140.

very wide from the truth; and I mention it for the sake of future visitors of the West Indies, who may wish to form just notions on this subject; for they may without danger of offence silently count the number of the huts, and may easily learn that of the slaves on a particular estate; and they will, I doubt not, be a good deal surprised, at the great disproportion between them, after every allowance for the probable number of the latter who have relatives naturally in the same household. The fact is, that small and frail though these tenements are, no small proportion of the common field-negroes are too poor and helpless to build one; and are glad to cbum with their relations or comrades how they may.

Strangers might also learn to estimate the degree of regard that is paid to the domestic comforts and lodgings of slaves, by what may be observed of the ordinary accommodations of those who live in their masters' houses, whether in the country or in town; for the want of appropriated lodgings, or of bedsteads and bedding, is not peculiar to the plantation negroes; the domestic slaves, who are much more within a stranger's notice, being in this respect as ill provided. It is generally thought enough to allow them to lie down on the floor of the hall, or some other sitting room if there be one, without carpet or matting, or any other bed clothes than their wrapper or flimsy blanket. The exhibition often thus presented to the eye of a guest, if he passes through this common dormitory in the morning before the sleepers are turned out, has employed the facetious powers of some of my opponents, the superficial West India tourists. Perhaps the gallant officers and other distinguished guests, who were led into such strange mistakes, did not, when they slept on shore, rise early enough in the morning to catch this trait of colonial manners; or might suppose that their kind hosts were more tender and liberal to their plantation slaves than to their domestics.

If, after all, I do not in this and other points satisfactorily account for their mistakes, let it be remembered that the attempt is quite gratuitous; for whether their testimony was sincere or not, I have proved it to have been grossly erroneous.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SLAVES ARE ALSO TREATED WITH GREAT HARSHNESS, NEGLECT, AND INHUMANITY, WHEN SICK.

THE only remaining topic which, on my plan of delineating only the *œconomical oppressions* of the system, calls for some distinct notice, is the treatment of slaves when sick; and this has been in some measure anticipated as incidental to the subject of labour.*

The witnesses brought forward on the part of the colonies, of course did not omit to represent this branch of treatment, like all the rest, as highly humane and liberal. I will not weary my readers here with particular citations, because they would furnish few or no details, from the examination of which I might refute, or teach European minds how to estimate, those laudatory generalities. I will merely refer to the answers given from the different colonies and their agents to the 11th and 12th standing interrogatories of the Committee of Privy Council; admitting that if true they were satisfactory enough; nay such as might lead our own poor, when sick, to wish themselves lodged in a plantation sick-house, hothouse, or hospital; for such it has been variously called, by the colonial witnesses and writers in England; though I do not remember to have heard it dignified by the name of *hospital*, in any West India island.

If the slaves have good treatment when sick, it is in this receptacle they must find it; for it is not alleged, I think,

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* See supra, p. 237. to 239.

that they are ever attended at their own homes; and we have already seen, that on the first apparent symptom of illness, whether real or feigned, viz. inability to work, the complainant is sent to and confined in the sick house, till the manager, with or without the doctor's advice, disallows the plea, or holds him recovered, and sends him again to the field.

Nor is this indiscriminate consignment to the hospital, if we must so call it, of all who cannot or will not persist in their daily work, regarded as a practice to be condemned, even by the most humane colonial advocates for improvements in the general system. Dr. Collins expressly points it out as one of the manager's duties. "To the hospital thus "prepared and provided" (i. e. with proper ventilation, separate rooms, and more attendants than a helpless superannuated negro nurse, improvements which he earnestly recommends,) "all your negroes who are absent from the "field, or from other services of the plantation, are to repair "every morning; and thither the list-board or plantation-roll "must be brought, after the overseer has called the list, and "noted the absentees. You will therefore make it your first "care, after rising in the morning, to look into the sick-"house, to see that all the absentees are there, or to inform "yourself where they are; for *if indisposed they should be in* "*the hospital; if well, in the field.*"*

I do not impute to the respectable author any inconsistency with his own principles in approving of such a practice. *His* object was, though *mine* is not, to defend colonial slavery, as an institution fit to be upheld; and I must in candour allow, that this alternative of the field or the sick-house is, like many other severities, a necessary consequence of the cruel institution itself, while it is permitted to exist. Where the proper incentives to labour, wages, or other remunerations depending on its steadiness, are wanting, every man would avoid it if he could; still more when it is excessive, and to be performed under the whip of a driver; and, consequently, when the only available plea for a suspension of it is sickness, that plea, whether true or false, would be continually advanced, if the

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* Practical Rules, 258, 9.

allowance of it were not productive of consequences, hardly less irksome or distressing than the labour itself.

We have seen how very frequently, even as the practice stands, pretences of sickness are made; and how extremely difficult it often is to distinguish between real and affected maladies:* what then would the case be, if instead of being sent to, and locked up in, a narrow and loathsome prison, such as Dr. Collins has described the sick-house to be, "a "*disgusting scene, charged with unpleasant odours, and occupied* "*by offensive objects;*" a place so repulsive to human nature, that he half absolves the manager and physician for neglecting their most important duties, by shrinking from the "*painful emotions*" which the bare entering into it excites; the sick or complaining negro were allowed to retire to his own hut, to have there the society of his wife, children, and connections, to be cheered and nursed by their affectionate care while confined to his pallet; and to enjoy during convalescence, relaxation in the open air?

Such, I need not say, are the consolations of our own peasants, when visited with sickness; and severe must be the sufferings which compel them to renounce the domestic scene, and resort to an hospital for cure, when the case demands it; notwithstanding the assiduous attention, with the great, and *to them* luxurious comforts, to be found in such asylums, the boasts of British liberality and benevolence. But then, it is not from incessant labour, and the cart-whip, that they present a refuge.

It is in truth a bitter derision to call these benignant institutions of ours, and the plantation sick-house, by the same name. If we look only to the medical treatment in them the contrast is extreme. "That business," says Dr. Collins, "is "committed to the joint labours of the attendant doctor and "the sick nurse; the former of whom makes his ordinary "visit once or twice a week at the most. He pops into the "hospital and questions the sick; when, if the pulse neither "indicates a fever, nor the frequency of stools a flux, he con- "cludes there is no disorder, and the negro is dismissed to

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* Supra, p. 238.

"the field. Yet even by this attendance, superficial as it is, "he earns dearly enough the slender stipend that is assigned "to him."*

He does so indeed; for awful is the reponsibility to his own conscience for the dismission, if his hasty judgment is erroneous. It may be in effect a sentence of death to the poor patient, which it will be the driver's duty to execute. Yet I have heard experienced West India practitioners feelingly lament the dilemma in which the plantation doctor is placed. If he is humane enough to withhold, in every doubtful case, his sanction for treating the complaint as an imposture, he may indeed save many a real invalid from an unjust whipping, or an immediate coercion of labour, which he cannot sustain without danger to his life; but must often, on the other hand, give effect to the artifices of his unfortunate patients, and encourage a needless resort to the sick-house; a line of conduct by which he is pretty sure to lose the confidence and good will of the manager, and most probably the medical charge of the estate.

For such consequences of the dilemma I can produce no express authority; but who that reads Dr. Collins's chapters on the sick and on the hospital, or even the extracts I have given from them, will doubt of their frequent occurrence? He strongly and repeatedly states there, and in other places, as we have partly seen, the extreme difficulty of distinguishing between the real, and the imaginary or pretended, diseases of slaves. What, indeed, can be more obvious, when the patient, from whose mouth alone many of the symptoms must be learnt, is always liable to the suspicion of intending to deceive. Yet we may collect, even from the last extract, that such difficult discrimination is the most ordinary business of the plantation doctor.

But even when the disorder is unequivocal and severe, we learn from the same authority that the poor patients have very little of medical attention to compensate their painful confinement in the sick house. "If the complaint be well "ascertained, no man would refuse to permit his slave to lie

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* Practical Rules, 254.

" down; but even in that case there is still much to condemn, " for where negroes are labouring in the hospital under severe " complaints, they are not commonly attended as they ought " to be."* " They are overlooked, (he says) and forgotten; " they linger in misery, and pine in neglect; and if they re- " cover, you may be assured it is nature that has carried them " through the disorder."†

He exposes the general insufficiency, not only of the Doctor, but the nurse. " It has been usual to select for that " purpose such as are infirm and superannuated for other " labour." Though he afterwards remarks, " The best ne- " gro of your gang is not too good for the office."‡

It may be conceived what the attention must be of a weakly old woman, unfit for ordinary labour, to all the patients, male and female, in a crowded sick-house, such as he states it often to be, especially when epidemic fluxes and fevers prevail, without any other assistant to administer the medicines; and when, as he further shews, it is no small part of her duty to keep them all safely locked up, and to watch against their escape. " There should be only one " outlet, which ought to be before the nurse's room, who " is to keep the keys, and to let the negroes in and out when " required. At night the outer door should be locked by one " of your house negroes, who is to bring the key into the " house, lest the nurse should absent herself from her charge, " or connive at the escape of some of her favourites."§

She has, however, some artificial aids in this turnkey part of her province; for *the " windows,"* he tells us, " *should be " fortified with bars or jealousies, to prevent the escape of the " negroes*;‖ and that in each of the apartments of the men " and women there should be *a pair of stocks, to punish the " refractory;* or *where they have been guilty of any other offence, " or sometimes merely to keep them in a recumbent posture, when " they have sores, which you will find a difficulty to heal other- " wise."***

My readers, perhaps, will be ready to question whether I

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* Ibid. p. 237. † Ibid. p. 264. ‡ P. 255.
§ Ibid. ‖ P. 255. ** P. 265.

am not by mistake describing a gaol, or house of correction for rogues and vagabonds, instead of an hospital for the sick. It is, indeed, worse by far than any such place of penal confinement known in this country; and is often used purely for that purpose, as may appear from this further quotation. "It is not the sick only, but sometimes the negroes in health, "whose offences are too light to require the *dungeon*, that are "put into the hospital, as a place of security, where they suffer "a privation of amusements, and are forthcoming to their labour." "This," Dr. Collins adds, "is a *very eligible mode* "*of punishing*, superior far to the whip, and will be found an "effectual substitute for it."*

No doubt the whipping must be severe to be more terrible than imprisonment in such a place as he describes: but it is not always a substitution. The sick-house is the general receptacle also of those offenders, who have been so cruelly lacerated by the cart-whip, that they are long incapable of work; for our author, in his chapter on discipline, says, "As "to that tremendous application of the cart-whip, *which con-* "*fines the delinquent to the sick-house for five or six weeks*, the "offence ought to be very weighty indeed, that can call for "and justify it." And among its ill effects he mentions, "the injury which the sufferer's constitution may sustain by "a long confinement in an uncomfortable position, with his "body naked, and sometimes insufficiently nourished."†

Among the comforts, therefore, which a poor debilitated and dejected slave finds to sustain his or her spirits in this sole receptacle of all the sick, are the shocking exhibitions of frames excoriated, torn, and deeply gashed with the merciless cart-whip, the groans of the wretched sufferers, and the reflection that like tortures may be his or her own portion after recovery. Perhaps the fugations or the thefts for which they have been thus dreadfully punished, were the effects of a necessity, well known to the poor sick spectator, who expects, in his turn, to be subjected to it, when the superior hardihood of his now disordered body no longer enables him to avoid the miseries of hunger, by sustaining incessant toil.

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* P. 265. † P. 209.

It may naturally excite surprise, that planters should thus immure together the unoffending sick, the suspected impostors, and the convicts, so to call them, of their own dread tribunals; and still more, that the humane Dr. Collins should acquiesce in, and even approve the practice. The fear of infection, it would seem, might alone suffice to prevent it. But the solution of this difficulty, as of every other, will be found in that master-key to the whole system, the pinching, niggardly parsimony on which the master's profits, from sugar planting, and most commonly his escape from ruin, are felt by him to depend. A second house, strong enough for the safe custody of prisoners, would add to the expense of erecting and upholding plantation buildings; an addition more than most proprietors can or will afford; and would require also the constant time of at least a single slave or keeper. It is œconomical, therefore, in more ways than one, to make the sick-house answer all the purposes of a gaol, and the sick nurse the functions of a gaoler; except that there is a small dark dungeon, the construction of which, of course, costs very little, for the punishment rather than custody, of great and hardened offenders, in which the stocks and chains, with a strong lock on the door, make a keeper needless.

Dr. Collins, however, it is just to remark, recommended an improvement in this respect; though, with his usual indulgence for the pernicious habits and necessities of the planters, he does not alarm them by insisting upon it, or censuring this ordinary use of the sick-house. Speaking of runaway slaves, when brought back, he recommends, that instead of the cruel whippings in use, "they should be secured "*in the hospital*, or some other place of safety, of which there "should be one appropriated for that purpose on every plan-"tation;"* though, in another passage before cited, he, without any such suggestion, recommends *confinement in the sick-house, in all cases of offences too light to require the dungeon.*

In another point he will be thought, less excusably, to have adhered to his conciliatory or compromising maxims; for he

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* P. 207.

states, without proper censure, and even expressly countenances in some degree, a further opprobrious peculiarity in many of these plantation hospitals, that of their sick inmates being left by the master without any allowance of food for their support. I have before briefly noticed the passage; but justice, if not to my author, at least to my subject, seems to require that I should here give it at large.*

Let those who have listened with credulity to the tales and reasonings of my antagonists, and especially to that specious argument, incessantly urged by them during forty years, that the planter's self-interest in preserving his slaves is a sufficient pledge for their good and humane treatment, pause a moment on the last-cited fact; and ask their own understandings, whether masters, who really fed their slaves sufficiently when in health, from regard to their preservation, or any other motive, would leave them destitute of food, or dependant on the casual ability and kindness of their friends for a supply of it, when labouring under disease and debility, and confined within the walls of a sick-house.†

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* "It is usual on many estates, when the negroes are in the hospitals, "to give them no other food than what their friends supply. If they "are provident people, and well connected, it may be sufficient, and they "may be trusted to be fed in that way, where their complaints are such "as to allow of your being indifferent to the quality of their food. But "there are many disorders wherein pepper pot and salt herrings are improper, and many negroes who, if abandoned to the assistance of their "friends, would run a risk of being starved: therefore it becomes ex-"pedient to have food prepared every day for the sick, or such as are in "the hospital, which is to be distributed according to their several "wants." (Practical Rules, p. 264, 5.)

† I cannot forbear remarking that this plausible but most fallacious argument, drawn from the master's self-interest, was used in this very case of the plantation hospitals, and in reference to the very island in which Dr. Collins resided at the time; but was combined with statements widely different from those which he several years after gave to the public: "There is a house allotted for the reception of the sick, &c.; "medicines proper for their different complaints are administered under "the direction of the physician, *and panada, gruel, sago, or other food "supplied them by their masters.* This is the common custom of the "country, which however is not established by law, but by that sense of "self interest, exclusive of any considerations of humanity, *which seldom*

Even if we could suppose this resource, in the sympathy of their poor fellow-slaves, never to fail, though Dr. Collins admits the contrary, what heart, unhardened by the exercise of this iron system, would not revolt at the thought of such injustice and oppression! But it is the hard lot of these unfortunate fellow-creatures, as I have before had occasion to remark, to have every probable or possible resource taken into the account of avarice against them; and magnified also in amount by its selfish optics. Their provision grounds, however sterile, their power of working for themselves in their diurnal respites from the driver's coercion, however brief, or on the Sabbath, the unavoidable licence of sucking the cane juice in crop-time, the picking grass or brushwood for sale at a Sunday market; and now, as we also find, the sympathy of their fellow-slaves, when they are shut up without food in a sick-house, are all valued, and greatly overvalued, in the master's arbitrament between himself and them, when regulating the subsistence which he is bound in conscience to provide for them.

After such views as have been opened of the hospital œconomy, the parsimonious remuneration of the doctor, and the consequent bad quality and quantity of the medical succour which the poor patients receive, are topics that I need not dilate upon; though Dr. Collins censures both with more than his ordinary freedom; and no man who reads his chapters "on the sick and on the hospital," will hesitate to adopt his conclusion, that "when the patients recover, we may be assured it is nature that has carried them through the disorder;" or, to dissent from his remark, that "*in the sick-house, they are indulged with all the facilities in the world to die.*"*

That they have no bedsteads or bedding there, may be thought of the less moment, because we have seen their customary destitution of such articles when in health; yet a reader who has ever walked through the wards of one of our own hospitals, and observed how well the ease and comfort of the poor patients are there provided for, far exceeding what

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"*fails to be a sufficient inducement to men to be careful of their property.*" (Privy Council Report, St. Vincent, A. No. 12. Evidence of *Governor Seton*, a West India Planter.)

* P. 91.

they are used to at their own homes, may feel a struggle between risibility and indignation, when he finds our author recommending in these hospitals of the plantations, the providing the sick negroes *with a deal board to sleep upon, and a blanket large enough to wrap round their bodies.**

He was as far from meaning any ironical insinuation by this advice, as from being an enthusiast in philanthropy, or a rash innovator, or a man of anti-slavery principles; witness his remark on the same sleeping accommodations, when he recommended them as improvements in the negro huts,—"upon "such a bed a slave sleeps more soundly, notwithstanding "what the mind may fiction of his miseries, than a despot on "down, being but little corroded with care, and not at all dis-"turbed with the dreams of liberty."†

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* See p. 256.

† Dr. Collins has added to his chapter on the hospital a particular enumeration of the ordinary diseases of slaves, with medical rules for their treatment; and from these it would be easy to deduce much confirmation of the general truth, that excessive labour, and bad or scanty aliment are the main causes of that shocking mortality and infecundity on sugar estates, by which the black population is in most colonies retrogressive, and every where kept from its natural increase among the most prolific of the human race. But I will not enlarge on topics of a technical kind, and will cite only what he says of a disease which he truly states to be very common on West India estates, and also one of the most obstinate and troublesome that negroes are afflicted with, viz. "the *mal d'estomach*, or dirt-eating:"—"This," he says, "is an effect of "relaxation, and its natural concomitant an impoverished state of the "blood, *arising commonly from a mean and unsubstantial diet*, not, as "hath been generally imagined, from the eating of dirt; which, though "it may aggravate the evil, and if habitually persisted in, may render it "altogether incurable, is, I believe, seldom *the primary cause of it.*" (p. 341.)

Whether a morbid state of the stomach is the cause or the effect of eating dirt, they are so generally found together, that the very names are convertibly used, and even by our author himself, to mark the same disease; and whether bad feeding is the proximate, or only the primary cause, of the negro thus satisfying the cravings of the stomach, is of no moral importance. It is so pernicious a custom, and so apt to spread among the slaves who witness it, that Mr. Beckford proposed to treat it as a public crime, and that the offenders should be transported from the colony, though he at the same time calls it "a singular affection which proceeds "from a depravity of appetite *or want of food*; and one that is incorri-"gible." (Remarks upon the Situation of Slaves in Jamaica, p. 95.)

Those who are versed in the slave controversies will recollect how

I will close my extract from his very important volume, as to the treatment of the slaves in sickness, with a passage or two, which may give some little relief, perhaps, to the feelings of my readers. "*They are able to endure* (he says) *with few* "*expressions of pain, the accidents of nature which agonize white* "*people. It is certainly a very great advantage to be able to* "*face death, the inevitable lot of all, as they do, not only without* "*dismay, but with an indifference which stoics have endeavoured* "*in vain to affect.*"*

He ascribes in some measure to the same cause, the fact, that fevers, so destructive to the whites in the West Indies, are rarely fatal to the slaves. He regards the terror to which the former are subject when seized with a fever, as tending greatly to aggravate the disease, and produce a fatal termination. The negroes, he says, "though no great reasoners, are "acute observers; and it is a common saying with them that "'*fear kills Bawkra*,' but from this danger negroes are res- "cued by their insensibility, as they are without any such "fear, having never speculated on the subject of death, and "*neither apprehending nor caring much about it.*"†

Another colonial opponent, whom I have frequently cited, Mr. Beckford, notices the same characteristic;‡ but no fur-

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much the colonial apologists and witnesses have laboured to repel the charges of abolitionists on this subject: yet I can truly say that the resident colonists, in their conversation on the other side of the Atlantic, generally ascribed the disease, like these authors, to the very obvious and natural cause of bad feeding; and facts very strikingly supported that easy solution; for on plantations in which the treatment in that respect was notoriously bad beyond the ordinary practice, dirt-eating was pre-eminently common and destructive; and when the estate passed into more liberal hands this malady was in general stopped in its progress and cured.

Another fact of a very curious kind stated by Dr. Collins seems to indicate a more general constitutional effect of the same cause, though he does not point out their connection: "The blood of negroes is of an "uncommonly dilute texture, possessing in numerous cases scarcely colour "enough to tinge linen." (p. 203.)

Let this be collated with a passage formerly quoted from his chapter on diet: "*What is there to enrich and thicken the fluids, what to strengthen* "*the solids, to give energy to the heart and to invigorate its pulsations?*" &c.

* P. 234. † P. 302.

† "Few negroes consider death in this light [as an evil]. I never

ther authority for it can be wanted, than that of a gentleman who had for twenty years visited multitudes of the sick and dying among this unfortunate class.

They are not, therefore, among those who, *through the fear of death*, are all their lives long subject to bondage. In compensation for many of the natural evils of human life, which oppression has aggravated, and worse artificial ones which it has created, it has given them a deliverance from that thraldom of rational nature, more perfect than philosophy or even religion itself, has often conferred. Nor can this create surprise, after such views of their human destiny as are here delineated, from the original drafts of their masters. For my own part, I can truly say, that I never saw the corpse of a common field-negro carried out for interment, without the same kind of emotion, though of course much stronger in degree, with which I have seen, during a hard frost in London, the lifeless body of an emaciated horse, who had dropped down in the hackney-man's harness. "Poor wretch, thou art at rest. I am glad thy toils and sufferings are ended!"

"knew one who did, or who either dreaded it by anticipation, or who was "apprehensive when it was hovering near." (Descriptive Account of Jamaica, vol. ii. p. 390.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE WHOLE EXPENCE OF THE MAINTENANCE OF PLANTATION SLAVES ESTIMATED, AND COMPARED WITH THE COST OF FREE LABOUR.

HAVING shewn, both in positive and comparative views, the oppressive excess of labour exacted from the plantation slaves, and the extreme parsimony of that maintenance which is the only return for it, under the several heads of food, clothes, lodging, and medical care in sickness, I will now endeavour to ascertain the entire cost of that maintenance to the master.

This is a point on which the planters and their apologists have for the most part deemed it best to be silent. In other respects, they anxiously exhibit before the public eye, the various charges incident to the growth and manufacture of sugar, with great particularity and precision; but the expense of maintaining their slaves, is an item in the account of which they are not so ostentatious. It is rarely noticed by them without necessity; and never but in a very vague and general way. Such has been their negligence, or their good policy, from the first outset of the abolition controversy; and such it continues to be.

Mr. Ramsay's statement was that the whole annual expense of a slave's maintenance to his owner, the particulars of which he detailed, was on too many plantations not more than 1*l.* 6*s.*, to which his antagonist Mr. Tobin opposed the following statement. "There are few West India proprietors I be-
"lieve but would esteem themselves very good œconomists,
"could they maintain a negro for four times the sum men-
'tioned by Mr. Ramsay."

The difference between the two statements is not so wide I apprehend as it seems to be; for Mr. Ramsay, writing and publishing in England, properly gave his estimates in sterling money; but Mr. Tobin apparently understood, or chose to treat this estimate, as referring to the current money of the Leeward Islands. I understand, therefore, Mr. Tobin's statement to have meant that the whole expense was not less than 5*l.* 4*s.* *currency*, which at the then medium of exchange, being 175 per cent., was equal to 2*l.* 19*s.* 5*d.* sterling.

For clearing this controverted ground, the committee of privy council adopted the following standing interrogatory. "*What is the annual expense of the maintenance of a negro man,* "*woman, and child at different ages respectively;*" and as it was transmitted, like the rest, to the legislative bodies in every colony, and addressed personally to their agents here, and to some eminent planters of almost every island, it may be concluded that clear and precise information could hardly fail to be obtained. But from some of the colonies, Jamaica especially, the return was a mere ignoramus; and where any information was given, it was only by a vague general estimate or guess.

The common excuse given for the want of more satisfactory or definitive answers, was that the slaves were chiefly, or partly maintained from the produce of the provision grounds; for which reason the Jamaica agent and planters, said "*the* "*question was not properly applicable to that island,*" and the council of the island, though they noticed the salt herring per day, and the quantities of corn, &c. given by the master, where provision grounds cannot be allowed to them, or when the seasons happen to fail, said nothing at all as to the value or cost of the articles so given.

Now it is manifest that such excuses were insufficient, and the answers all evasive. If the cost of native provisions could not be valued, it was because they in fact cost the master nothing at all; nothing at least that he can retain to his own profit, or rightfully withhold; and nothing, therefore, that he can fairly take credit for in stating an equitable account between himself and his slaves. The land is allotted to them only because it is fit for no other use; and the labour is their own, not his; unless he has a right to work them in some

other way for his own profit, on the Sabbath, and at other seasons of rest allowed to them by law. The item of food, therefore, when raised on the estate by the slaves' own time, should in justice have been left out of the account. But if not, the want of certainty as to that article formed no good reason for silence as to the cost of the other articles of maintenance, the amount of which was clearly known; viz. the herrings, the clothing, and the medical attendance that are supplied from the master's purse.

In the foreign-fed colonies the excuse was more palpably bad, because dependency on the master's allowances of food is there the general case; and any material aid from the provision grounds forms, in some islands, but a rare exception. Yet there also, the actual expense of feeding was a fact uniformly withheld; and with it that of clothing, and all the other items of actual disbursement; and nothing better was obtained than loose general estimates of the whole annual expense.

That these estimates were, by all the colonial assemblies, carried as high as they could be without trespassing too much against credibility, will hardly be doubted, if we regard the nature and objects of the controversy; still less, when we advert to the spirit with which those honourable bodies met the other enquiries into their interior system, abundant examples of which have been furnished from the same very important report.

One of the foreign-fed colonies, indeed, like Jamaica, gave no estimate at all, and assigned rather an extraordinary reason for it. "*No particular accounts,*" said the Council and Assembly of MONTSERRAT, "*having been kept on any estates,* "*we cannot ascertain this point.*" What! no invoices or bills of parcels of stores imported, or bought from the insular merchants, no accounts with the doctor, &c., and no plantation books for the information of absent owners, on any estate in that island! It was passing strange, if true.

But from most other colonies of that class general conjectural estimates were returned, instead of the particulars or entire amount of actual expenditure, which, unless all their planters were as strangely careless as those of Montserrat alleged themselves to have been, they could very easily have furnished. Exaggeration of course being the common object,

they all, in various degrees, exceed the truth; though to magnify the charge on the master, some of them expressly include, not only the partial and occasional aid from the slave's own provision ground, but the cane-juice he drinks in crop-time, and even taxes paid to the colonial treasuries, merely because the number of a man's slaves regulates the assessments upon him. Yet I might safely rely even on the highest of these estimates, and still more on their medium amount, in proof of the unexampled and truly oppressive vileness to which the price of human labour has been reduced in the sugar colonies. The extracts in the subjoined note will, I trust, support this proposition, to the conviction of the most incredulous reader,* for if these estimates from all the foreign-

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* At *Nevis*, the answer of the Council and Assembly was: "The ex-"pense of maintaining a man or woman, independent of the produce of "their grounds, cane-juice, molasses, &c. is about six pounds per annum. "With these, it may be valued at fifteen pounds. The maintenance of "children may be calculated at from two thirds to one half of the above "sums." Currency being here meant, which is now worse by one half than sterling, but was then as 175 to 100, these valuations respectively were equal to about 3*l*. 8*s*. and 8*l* 6*s*. sterling money; but the smaller sum only, subject to the reduction for children, can fairly be regarded, supposing this estimaie right in other points, as maintenance given at the master's expense. The cane-juice, indeed, if he could possibly withhold it from them, might add somewhat to his sugar; but he is indemnified for its loss, as we have seen, by a reduction of the rations in crop-time.

The Council and Assembly of *Antigua* said: "This expense must be "different in the different islands, and it is certain that it is different on "different estates in this island; and it very often depends upon the im-"portation or scarcity of the articles of food, and not less frequently on "the weather in general. The average maintenance of a slave, for food "and clothing, in health and sickness, cannot be estimated at less than "four pounds sterling per annum." The language here pretty plainly shews, that such supplies as provision grounds in some situations, and in favourable seasons, might afford, were not left out of the account.

"The annual expense of each slave, one with another" (said the Council of *Barbadoes*), "will be at least five pounds." And the Governor gave the same estimate, explaining it as current money, which at that island is forty per cent. worse than ours; consequently the value given is 3*l*. 11*s*. 5*d*. sterling.

From *St. Christopher* the answer of the Council and Assembly was, "In this island, where there is but little country provision raised, and "therefore the principal part of the negro's food must be imported, "which of late years comes very high to the planter, the average expense

fed colonies, that sent any estimate at all, are compared together, it will be found that their medium amount is 3*l.* 17*s.* 7½*d.* sterling per annum; and if we were to suppose this not beyond the truth, allowing all that they unfairly included in those estimates, it would give somewhat less than one shilling and sixpence sterling, as the whole weekly charge of a slave's maintenance. This is one-sixth part of the wages of the English peasant, taking the latter at nine shillings per week; but with just allowances, the contrast would be still greater; for since the slaves' clothing is brought from England, and his imported food also, either from England or North America, the cost of freight, insurance, and other mercantile charges, must make those articles much dearer in the West Indies than they are in this country.

Bad though the case was upon these premises, in fact it was, and I firmly believe still is, much worse; and had the query of the Privy Council been fairly answered, the result, I doubt not, would have been a much nearer confirmation of Mr. Ramsay. He will be thought, however, sufficiently confirmed, perhaps, by these estimates; his own having related not to all, but "too many" plantations, with an admission that, on others the allowance of food was considerably greater. The assemblies naturally took the highest degree of liberality that was known, for their general average; and when men choose to give us estimates and generalities, withholding accounts and particulars which they have power to produce, it is reasonable to consider on which side their statements are most likely to err. Individual witnesses called on the side of the colonies, were not more explicit than their assemblies. As to the important particulars of clothing and imported food, it is striking to observe, that no one planter among the many who were examined by the Committees of Privy Council and of Parliament, thought fit to state what the annual expense actually had been on his own or any other estate; and that, when interrogated as to the entire charge of the slaves' main-

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"of a negro in sickness and in health amounts to about 8*l.* currency, exclusive of taxes," (i. e. about 4*l.* 11*s.* sterling). See for all these extracts, the Privy Council Report, Q. A. No. 7, under the names of the respective colonies.

tenance, their uniform course was to say they could not tell, or to offer only such vague estimates as I have here extracted, though it was perfectly easy for them to ascertain with the utmost exactness from documents in every proprietor's possession or power, and from the accounts of their consignees in this country, what the clothing had cost, and also in the foreign-fed colonies, the cost of the imported food.

This suppression, as to the article of clothing at least, will not be hard to account for, if we recollect the discoveries that Doctor Collins afterwards made incidentally in the course of his friendly advice to his brother planters. They shew that the whole expense of clothing for an adult slave must have been considerably less than a pound sterling per annum; since the improvement which he anxiously recommended, including blankets, were to raise it by his estimate to not more than eighteen, or at the most to twenty shillings, in the whole.*

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* Lest it should be thought that Dr. Collins's estimate was erroneously low, or supposed that greater liberality now prevails, I subjoin the following account of the negro clothing, charged in the accounts of the consignees of a sugar plantation for the year 1825. It is a perfectly fair, if not too favourable a specimen of such accounts, many of which, as well as this, have been passed in my own office, as a Master in Chancery.

9	Dozen mens' and womens' best negro hats, at 20*s.*	9	0	0
1	Dozen ditto	1	0	0
2	Dozen boys' and girls' ditto	1	13	0
12	Mens' fine, with bands and buckles, at 4*s.* 9*d.*	2	17	0
3	Pieces flax Osnaburgs, 438, at 6½*d.*	11	8	1
3	Ditto Ditto	11	8	1
3	Ditto Ditto 436	11	7	1
12	Pieces best indigo dyed blue field-negro clothing, 52 at 624 yards, 16½	42	18	0
	Thread, shipping charges, &c.	3	8	0
6	Blue cloth jackets lined with serge	2	17	0
20	Yards of flannel, at 1*s.*, 1*l.*—4 dozen caps, at 9*s.*, 1*l.* 16*s.*	2	16	0
	Wrapper and charges	0	4	0
		£100	16	3

The whole number of slaves, as may be computed from the hats, was estimated at 156; and there was no motive for more than ordinary economy. Yet the whole expence will be found to have been less than twelve shillings for each slave.

We hear of the great expence of supplies from this country to West India estates; but how small a part of them are for the use of the slaves!

It is to be regretted, that the other *data*, withheld by the colonial witnesses, the charge of subsistence especially, have not been supplied by Dr. Collins, or any other writer whom I am at liberty to quote as an authority.*

The entire invoices for the year, in the same account, amounted to 467*l.* 7*s.* 7*d.*

Should any of my opponents object to this account, as not a fair specimen, let them produce those of other consignees, as they easily may, if it will serve their cause, for the last five years; and shew if they can, greater liberality in any West India colony.

* The Reverend Mr. Bickell, being a writer on the anti-slavery side, is not one whom I can cite in a direct way consistently with my rule, but when his statements are quoted controversially by a well-accredited colonial champion like Mr. Barclay, and their truth only in part denied by him, I may fairly cite this fellow-labourer, and his antagonist together, to shew the virtual admission of the rest.

Now Mr. Bickell contrasted the oppressively parsimonious returns made to the slave for his labour, with the value of the labour itself; and for that purpose he gave, with the most particular details, both sides of the account, carrying to the master's credit, not only every ordinary, but every occasional expence for the slave's support or benefit, and every thing that can be alleged to fall within that description; and he made the whole amount of that expence to be 6*l.* 1*s.* Jamaica currency, or about 4*l.* 6*s.* 1½*d.* sterling per annum.—*West Indies as they are*, p. 244.

The results of his calculations were, that the master, taking the value of the labour at a much lower rate than is paid for it to the owners of slaves when hired out by them, clears at least 20*l.* Jamaica currency per annum by every working slave, and consequently is fully reimbursed in seven years for the price at which he bought his gang, even supposing it as high as 140*l.* per slave.

These conclusions being thought by the planters invidious, are anxiously combated by their champion, Mr. Barclay, who taxes his reverend opponent with exaggeration, and endeavours to shew errors in his account; but on *on one side of it only*. He attempts to prove that the value of the labour is over-rated, but not that the expences of the slave's maintenance are in any respect put too low. (See p. 424 to 426.) To add to the latter, would obviously have been as much to his purpose as to diminish the former, and more for the master's credit: his not objecting to the estimate of those expences, therefore, is equivalent to an admission that it was at least sufficiently high.

In fact, as this Jamaica planter, and those who employed him, well knew, Mr. Bickell had given credit to the master for more than his actual expences. He must have valued the clothing and other imported articles apparently at the retail prices at which they were sold in the island, instead of their wholesale cost to the master, when imported by himself; and he had included in his amount of 6*l.* 1*s.* currency, a rent of 1*l.* 10*s.*

It will, however, be abundantly sufficient for my purpose to assume, that the general estimates furnished from so many quarters, were not below the truth. If so, the cost of human labour to the colonial and English agriculturist respectively, so far as that cost arises from maintenance or wages, would be in the proportion of one to six, supposing the weekly time of work the same in both cases. But if, instead of computing by the week or year, we take the number of working hours, it results from the comparison in my sixth chapter, that the disparity is, in fact, twice as great; and that for a given return in maintenance or wages, the labour of the slave is to that of the free-man, in the truly enormous ratio of twelve to one.

On the fullest consideration, I can see no ground on which the truth of this very important general deduction can be fairly impeached or questioned. To the plea that the planter is burthened with the support of those slaves who cannot work, as well as those who do, I have already in part replied. It has been shewn to be true only in respect of that small proportion of a West India gang which consists of weaned children under six years of age; since children above that age do enough for the the master's benefit to compensate a larger support than he gives.* Be it observed, moreover, that most of the estimates which I have cited regard the adults only: that discrimination as to children, which the standing query asked for, was given from no colony but Nevis; and there it was admitted that the maintenance of children was less expensive than that of adults by a difference of from one-third to one-half.

As to slaves, too feeble for the labours of the cane-piece from old age, accident or infirmity, they are, in general, hardly less useful to the master than those in the prime of life; for the important duties of watchmen, which must otherwise be performed by younger and stronger men, are principally

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for the provision-land, which he ought not to have done; for it is no cost to the master, or diminution of his profit, that he gives the use of that, which would otherwise be useless to himself.

* "It does not require more than five or six years before they are "capable of labour; little, indeed, at that tender age, yet sufficient to "defray the expences of their own support."—Collins, p 173.

theirs; and severe enough is this service, as Mr. Beckford in his smaller work has abundantly shewn. The passage is too long to be conveniently extracted; but it proves the lot of these poor invalids to be the reverse of idleness or ease; and often so very painful and distressing, that no feeling mind can read his account of it without emotion.*

As to the wives, for the support of whom also some of my opponents strangely claim credit in these accounts between slaveand master, they earn their scanty maintenance, as we have seen, not less laboriously than their husbands, except for a brief period, before and after child-birth; and even then, in a degree that much exceeds in value the charge of their subsistence.

But such pleas, were they true, would not at all diminish the vast difference between the cost of slave labour and free; for the English agriculturist also is burthened, and in a far greater degree, with the support of those who yield him no work in return. The aged and infirm, and the children too, when the family is too large for the father's means, or when he is taken from or deserts them, are maintained by our landholders and farmers, through their large contributions to the poor-rates. In the same view, that boasted and magnified item in the planter's scanty account, his medical charges for the sick, or doctor's allowance, is no peculiar burthen on the slave-holder; for the free labourer, when sick, has medical aid, as well as general support from the parish.

There are, I admit, distinctions which most materially lessen, if not wholly reverse, this œconomical disparity in a view to the master's profit; but they are such as cannot be included in any estimate, positive or comparative, of the slave's compensation for his forced labours, on principles of humanity and justice.

One of them is the enormous amount of human labour expended upon sugar estates. The English farmer does not employ a tenth part of the number of hands on a like quantity of arable land in culture; and if the planter were to pay for his forced work at the rate of English wages, his expences

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* See Beckford's Remarks on the situation of Negroes in Jamaica, p. 16 to 20.

in that article, per acre, would probably exceed the farmer's, in the proportion of twenty to one. But these are among the bad consequences of the oppressive system, not justificatory or extenuatory causes. It is the unjust and cruel parsimony with which the slaves are maintained, and the excessive amount of their forced work, that induces the planter to prefer their labour, in most cases, to that of cattle, and to the use of the plough and other machinery by which human hands might be spared.

The planter also has to buy, not only his land and stock, but his labourers; and the English agriculturist happily has not this latter charge to sustain. Interest on the purchase-money of the slaves, I admit, therefore, must be added to the charge of their maintenance before the planter can count his gains by their labour. But it is neither my duty, nor my object, to maintain that the system is gainful; or to shew that the planters might always provide adequately for the subsistence and well-being of their slaves out of profits which they make, beyond interest on the capital employed.

I freely admit, what, indeed, I have heretofore publicly alleged and proved, that sugar-planting by slave labour is, on the whole, a losing game; a lottery, in which, though there are many prizes, and some high ones, the blanks so largely outnumber them as to make the result to the adventurers, collectively, great and certain loss. The spirit of gambling makes the chances sell for much more than their real value. By a majority, therefore, of the individuals who hold them, it may always be truly alleged that they are not enabled, by the returns of their estates, more liberally to maintain their slaves. But then I utterly deny the validity of this excuse, for the insufficiency of their support.

We have seen, indeed, that the colonial party, while admitting that slaves often suffer grievously, and perish for want of food, think it enough to ascribe it to the master's indigence and embarrassments, and to the low returns of his produce, compared with the heavy charges upon his estate; and reason as if these circumstances formed a sufficient defence. They are so confident in that false view, as to retort upon us anti-slavery writers the charge of inhumanity, and reproach us with augmenting the sufferings of our sable protegées,

whenever we oppose measures profitable to the planters. Our opposition, even to the cruel licence of transporting their slaves to new colonies, has been thus censured; because, as the master's circumstances might be improved by it, the slaves, as is most fallaciously inferred, would be better sustained.*

On the contrary I know of no truth more demonstrable, though to the uninformed it may seem paradoxical, than that the interests of the plantation slave are, under the existing system, directly opposed to, instead of being the same with his master's; and that the more profitable his work at present is, the worse, cæteris paribus, he is likely soon to be treated.

Nor will this appear at all strange, if we keep in view two characteristics of this unhappy relation, which almost every writer on the state of the British sugar colonies has noticed, and consider for a moment what must be their natural effects; I mean the very great frequency with which the slaves and the estates they belong to pass to new owners by sales; and the almost universal non-residence of proprietors who can afford to live in Europe. That the prosperity which produces the latter effect is adverse to the welfare of the slaves, will not, I presume, be disputed; and it is equally true, though not so obvious, that whatever raises the marketable value of a sugar plantation, when sold, tends to increase the sufferings of its enslaved cultivators under the new owner. The higher the price he has paid, the larger of course the amount of interest to be made good on a capital, (for the most part borrowed,) out of the future proceeds; and the less the ability to act liberally or humanely in the future maintenance of the slaves. The effect might, indeed, be harmless to them, if there were equability or permanence in those causes which affect the price of such property; but there is no subject of speculation more unsteady in its returns than a sugar estate; and yet none of which present or recent productiveness so exclusively governs the price.

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* See the Appendix, No. 3. to my former volume, in which these pretexts are noticed, and the views they rest upon shewn to be wholly delusive.

Whether these views are admitted or not, no *European* moralist will maintain, that the high price paid for a slave or for the estate he works upon, diminishes the obligation to give him an adequate subsistence; yet if the excuse of the planter's poverty is valid, a man might justify his giving his slaves no subsistence at all, and actually starving them to death; merely by his own improvidence, in contracting for the extravagant price at which his plantation was bought.

It is clear, nevertheless, from many passages which I have cited, that the lax moralists, who conduct and defend West India slavery, entertain very different views on this subject. Nor can it be doubted, that many proprietors, who, from residence on their estates, cannot be deceived as to the real facts of the case, find a sedative for their own consciences, in the sense of those difficulties under which it is, and always has been, their ordinary lot to labour.

Doctor Collins plainly was aware of the prevalence of such self-deception; for he reasoned anxiously to remove it, as an obstacle to the very inadequate mitigations that he ventured to recommend of the oppressive general economy. "As to "those who are unfortunately in such a situation, with re- "spect to incumbrance and credit, as to be disabled from "supplying their negroes as they ought, it behoves them to "consider, whether, by the utmost their undue savings can "effect, they can possibly be retrieved from their embarrass- "ments? And if they can, they ought seriously to ponder on "the consequences by which their relief is to be obtained; "that it must be by the blood of their own species! A horrid "thought; and if they cannot, how much better would it be "for them to surrender at once their property to their cre- "ditors," &c.*

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* Practical Rules, p. 12.

If Dr. Collins had addressed this reasoning in private to any friend of the description he gives, he might probably have had this reply—"What "would my negroes gain, by the final sacrifice of all my own hopes in "life through the surrender you advise? Messieurs ——— and ——— "my mortgagees, you know, are too wise to become planters themselves, "and they will, therefore, sell my estate; nor can it be expected they "will write off any part of the debt to profit and loss account, while "they have any hope to realize the whole. They will find, as usual, some

Readers unconnected with slavery, will not dissent from this advice. They will admit, that neither the high prices paid by the proprietor for his land and slaves, nor the number of them he has to maintain, nor his bad returns, nor his debts, nor his necessities, from whatever causes arising, can justify or excuse that oppressive parsimony which has been proved to characterize the whole system of the sugar planters; and to have prevailed from a time when no such ground of apology could be in general found, except from permanent causes, inherent to the wretched system itself.

"speculative purchaser, some thrifty manager, perhaps. who has by "parsimony saved a small sum, and is ambitious of being a proprietor. "He will pay his all on account of the debt, hoping to raise the rest from "future produce; will take the chances that I renounce, of better crops "and prices; and to improve them, will push the estate to the uttermost. "The negroes will be worse fed, and harder worked, perhaps, than now, "and probably punished with a severity that I have never exercised, by "a new master who is a stranger to their habits and character. I will "keep the possession, therefore, while I can, in the hope of better "times."

The excuses here stated are, in point of fact, well founded on ordinary experience; and I know that similar ones have satisfied the consciences of some such unfortunate men. I have heard it from their own lips.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUDING AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

And I asked what are my practical conclusions, from the shocking and opprobrious facts established in this and my former volume? What can they be, but one,—that the effectual interposition of Parliament should not a moment longer be delayed?

Enough was known before; more than enough was incontrovertibly proved; nay, enough was always admitted or undenied; to make the legislative toleration of this slavery a disgrace to the British and Christian name. Iniquity, indeed, of every kind, loses in human detestation, what it gains in mischief, by wide, unreproved diffusion, and by age. We sin remorselessly, because our fathers sinned, and because multitudes of our own generation sin, in the same way without discredit. But if ever those most flagitious crimes of Europe, slave-trade and colonial slavery, shall cease to be tolerated by human laws, and live in history alone, men will look back upon them with the horror they deserve; and wonder as much at the depravity of the age that could establish or maintain them, as we now do at the murderous rites of our pagan ancestors, or the ferocious cannibal manners of New Zealand.

There is enough in the simplest conception of personal hereditary slavery, to revolt every just and liberal mind, independently of all aggravations to be found in its particular origin, or in abuses of the master's powers. But how much should sympathy and indignation be enhanced, when the cruel perpetual privation of freedom, and of almost every civil and human right, is the punishment of no crime, nor the

harsh consequence of public hostility in war, but imposed upon the innocent and helpless, by the hand of rapacious violence alone; and maintained for no other object but the sordid one of the master's profit, by the excessive labour to which they are compelled?

Were our merchants to send agents to buy captives from the bandits in the forests of Italy, or from the pirates on the Barbary coast, and sell them here as slaves, to work for our farmers or manufacturers; and were the purchasers to claim, in consequence, a right to hold these victims of rapine and avarice, with their children, in bondage for ever, and to take their work, without wages; what would it be but the same identical case we are contemplating, except that the captives were of a different complexion? Yet the bandits and pirates are hanged; and their vendees, in the case supposed, would have less to apprehend from actions or indictments for false imprisonment, than from the vengeance of indignant multitudes. It certainly, at least, would not be necessary, for the purpose of their deliverance, to prove, to the British Parliament or people, that the poor captives were overworked, underfed, driven with whips to their work, punished in a brutal way for every real or imputed fault, and by such complicated oppressions, brought in great numbers prematurely to their graves.

But an advocate of the unfortunate Negroes, in the present day, has to address himself to many who have so far surrendered their judgment to colonial imposture, and their moral feelings to colonial influence and example, as almost to doubt whether personal slavery is an evil, or its unjust imposition a crime. It was not, therefore, without necessity, that I have torn from that social monster the screen which distance and falsehood had cast before him, and exhibited him to the eyes of the British people in his true and hideous forms.

Having now performed that painful and invidious task; having shewn by decisive evidence, what the slavery of the sugar colonies really is, both in law and practice; I will not waste the time of my readers, by offering any arguments in proof that such a state should no longer be suffered to exist. It would indeed be worse than idle; it would be insulting their understandings and their hearts to do so. It would be

supposing in them a perfect insensibility to every moral delineation. That personal slavery should find apologists and partizans among the people of England, is strange, and opprobrious enough; especially at the present day, when we hail with enthusiasm the march of civil liberty in every foreign land, and are scarcely satisfied with its perfection in our own: but if our love of freedom, be thus grossly inconsistent, I trust our national humanity, will be more impartial; and that, though many among us, who profess to detest slavery, civil or personal, in Greece and Spain, and Portugal and Algiers, have defended its far heavier yoke in the sugar colonies,—all who are not principals, or accomplices in the cruel and murderous oppressions which I have here delineated, will view them with abhorrence. I will anticipate, then, no dissent by any disinterested reader from my conclusion, that this most odious system ought to exist no more.

The means, the time and the manner of its abolition, are subjects on which I may perhaps be expected to add some practical suggestions. It was my design to do so, and the preparations I have already made for it, have very greatly added to the delay of the present publication; for I found it impossible to open my views on those points in a manner adequate to their importance, and the most likely to be useful, without entering at some length into subjects of collateral controversy; since on some of them misconceptions widely prevail, and stand opposed to principles on which all right measures must be founded.

To repel the claim of compensation or indemnity to the planters in the case of enfranchisement, at least in its extravagant extent, and as matter, not of favour but of right; to demonstrate the frivolity and impotence of the measures already adopted or proposed, in pursuance of the parliamentary resolutions of May 1823, and the absurdity of pretending to prepare the poor negroes better for the use of freedom, by protracting their brutalizing bondage; to expose the shameful inconsistency of this pretext, with the still training their issue from the birth to the same degrading and corrupting slavery, and with retaining in that state multitudes of adults, whose present fitness for freedom is not, and cannot be disputed; to refute the slanderous and preposterous imputations on secta-

tian missionaries; and expose the vile hypocrisy of the planters in affecting a zeal for orthodoxy, as a mere cloak for anti-christian persecution, and for driving away, on that pretence, the pious self-devoted teachers, by whose humble and laborious efforts almost exclusively, the poor slaves have hitherto been in any degree brought within the Christian pale; to shew the utter hopelessness of reconciling, with incessant labour extorted by the whip, religious or any other kind of intellectual culture and improvement; to refute the calumnies that have been propagated by the oppressors of the African race, as to their general character and conduct in a state of freedom; and herein to expose the many misrepresentations of facts and fallacious reasonings of Messrs. Moody, M'Kenzie, and others as to the interesting case of Hayti;—these, and other corrections of prevalent errors and impostures, have employed my pen so largely, that were I to persist in the purpose of adding my discussion of those topics to the present volume, its bulk would be likely to preclude every hope of its utility; at least at the present very critical period. Should such discussions be necessary, my preparations for them will not I trust be thrown away. I may submit my views on them to the public in a supplementary tract; especially the arguments which, I have thrown together to prove that the claim of compensation, (which, by a strange solecism in morals, is advanced as a bar to the demands of justice towards those from whom it is not pretended that any compensation is due,) is founded upon false premises and sophistical conclusions; and that even as between the mother country and the planters, the claim has no sound foundation. The leading answer to it indeed will be pretty obvious to reasoning minds, upon the case which I have here established; and I will offer a brief view of it here.

If the value of slavery consists in the power of working the negroes to excess, and with a parsimony in their maintenance at which humanity revolts, where is the act of parliament or other national measure by which such treatment is sanctioned, and the profit arising from it virtually guaranteed? Can we be said to have been accomplices in that of which we did not know; and the existence of which, when we inquired into it, was solemnly denied?

As between the injured Africans and us, we have been accomplices with their oppressors; and, though not in *pari delicto*, would be equally bound to compensate, if their wrongs did not exceed all possibility of compensation; for wrong-doers may be justly answerable for consequences they neither meditated nor foresaw. But upon what principle can one of two offenders claim an *indemnity* from the other, for the consequences of their mutual act, even if there had been full complicity between them? In that case there might perhaps be an equitable claim to a *contribution*; but even to this, there would be a decisive bar, if the party claiming it had deceived his accomplice, and led him inconsciously into that part of the wrong from which the whole damage arose. A. concurs with B. in putting on board a ship clandestinely a trunk containing prohibited goods, without the master's privity. They are such as subject the ship to forfeiture; and she is accordingly seized and condemned; but A. did not know that the goods were of a prohibited kind; and B., who did know it, had led him to believe that they were only such as were liable to an export duty, the non-payment of which would not affect the ship. Both are liable to make good the loss to the owners; but a claim by B. for a contribution from A. would be manifestly groundless and unjust.

Not less so in the present case, the claim of the West India planters. Had their representations been true, there would have been no loss to compensate; for they assured us that their slaves were so very lightly worked, and so abundantly maintained, that their state, in an economical view, was equal to, if not more advantageous to them than, freedom. If so, we had reason to expect that the liberty we concurred in the privation of, might soon be restored, without loss to their owners; and such, in fact, were the expectations under which the parliament and government of this country were persuaded to act. No man at all acquainted with the abolition controversy can suppose that, without such a delusion, the slave trade would have survived, nearly twenty years, the privy council and parliamentary inquiries; and slavery twice as long.

It is enough, however, that, as the case stands, slavery

would be of no value to the planter, if the economical oppressions were not to be continued together with the slavery itself; and this, the facts I have demonstrated evince beyond dispute. Are we bound, then, to compensate for the loss of sixteen hours' labour in the twenty-four to those who led us to believe they took but eight or nine? or to make good the vast difference between free wages and the miserable maintenance of a slave, to those who told us the latter was so liberal as to make no such difference at all! This and more we must do, if we admitted the extravagant claim of payment for the slaves and the estates, at the prices they would now be valued at: whereas, could the course be effectually taken of reducing the work, and raising the maintenance of slaves to what the planters affirmed, and still affirm, to be their actual amount, the claim of compensation might be allowed, without adding a cypher to the minister's budget.

I may be told, perhaps, that some of my fellow-labourers have been ready to admit the principle of compensation. Yes, and so were the friends of Antonio, the merchant of Venice, to "pay the bond thrice and let the merchant go," when they feared that the alternative must be the "pound of flesh." But I know full well that the bond will not thus be cancelled; and, therefore only, like Portia, demand that its validity shall be a subject of previous adjudication. Let it not, however, be understood, that I am at all indisposed to treat the case of the planters with all possible favour and indulgence that may consist with a performance of our duty to the slaves. The admission of their claims as of right; and the granting aid and relief to them, from a liberal and kind consideration of the pressure that may arise from a change of system not less due from them than from ourselves, are questions of a very different kind; and though I am prepared to demonstrate that all the difficulties of their present situation in the old colonies, as well as all the inconvenience and loss to which the abolition of slavery may expose them, are the fruits of their pertinacious support of the slave trade alone, after the first calls for its suppression; I am not only willing, but desirous, that they should, even at a serious expence to the revenue and commerce of the country, be supported and relieved.

Mr. Pitt, in the debate of April 1791, took the same impor-

tant distinction, and in the same identical case: for the indemnity of the planters, as a condition of the abolition of the slave-trade, was then as strongly insisted upon, as now it is in respect of the abolition of slavery, and on the same grounds: but he repelled the claim of right with unanswerable arguments, which I desire to invoke; though the bar to it, which I have suggested in the present case, did not in that case. But he reserved the consideration of what might be granted as matter of liberality if loss should prove to have been incurred by the public.

Here, however, I anxiously desire the attention of the legislature, and particularly of his Majesty's ministers, if any of them should think these sheets worth their perusal, to one most important caution. If support or relief is to be given to the planters upon an abolition of slavery, or with a view to that measure, the only way in which it can be conveniently, impartially, and effectually administered, is by a well-regulated remission of duties on the importation of sugar, founded on and adapted to the principle, not that the people should buy that article cheaper, or that the consumption should be increased; but that the planter should obtain a better price for it, in proportion to his loss by a diminished production, in consequence of the reduction of labour.

While slavery continues, every advance of the planters' profits, is an instigation to keep up and increase, if possible, the pressure on the slaves. But in the event of an emancipation, whether immediate and general, or progressive, the case would be reversed; and the more of import duties we had then to remit, the larger would be the means of compensating the planter, without increased burthens on the people of these united kingdoms, for the diminution of his produce. If the concurrence of the planters could have been hoped for, the best means of obtaining it would perhaps have been by proportioning the remission of duties on the produce of the colonies respectively, to their respective advances in the work of emancipation; in other words to their reduced production. If Mr. Canning were living, he could attest for me that these are not new suggestions from my pen. I had long entertained a belief, that by such a system, some of the smaller colonies might have been induced willingly to emancipate their slaves.

It was to such a system that I looked, from the first, for the cessation of slavery after the abolition of the trade. The prospect was dismally clouded, if not finally shut out, by the most unwise and most inconsistent acquisition of new sugar colonies, after that measure took place. But even this bad and unprincipled course of policy is, perhaps, not yet remediless. I must refrain from here opening my views more explicitly; but I conjure ministers to think well of these brief suggestions, before they adopt a measure now strongly solicited, and to which Mr. Goulburn declared himself not adverse, that of lowering the duties at this juncture, while slavery is unabolished, undiminished, and unreformed. The encouragement which it would give to the resistance of the assemblies is obvious; but it is not this, on which I would here insist. If slavery were to be perpetual, I would not object to any remission of duties, or their total removal. I would rather wish that no such revenue existed. I would say, "cast it not into the treasury, for it is the price of blood." But if that great national iniquity is ever to cease, we should, by reducing the duties, lessen the means of promoting that great reformation; and of reconciling, in, perhaps, the best possible way, the deliverance of the slaves, with the interests of their masters.

Considerations of still greater weight than a desire not to enlarge still further the dimensions of this work, have concurred with these, to induce me, since all the preceding sheets were out of press, to alter and contract my plan, that I may the sooner address a warning voice to the legislature, and to the country, on this momentous subject.

The peace of Europe is at an end. Its prospect of long repose has vanished like a dream. Revolution and civil war have recommenced their dread career; and new tremendous conflicts of exasperated nations, seem near at hand. A halcyon interval was given, during which France, Spain and Holland, might have propitiated the just Governor of the world, by desisting from their impious outrages against his laws on the African coast, and in their transatlantic territories; but they have only mocked him by hypocritical pretences, and violated promises of reformation. Their calm, therefore, instead of the dawn of a long tranquil day, will prove, I fear, to have been like the short lull which divides the southern from the northern

blasts of a hurricane; and of which the last, is commonly the most furious and destructive.

The profane may scoff if they please; but I will not fear to declare that I regard these events as indications of Divine wrath; and forerunners of approaching chastisements on the nations of Europe, for the grievous and impious oppression of the unfortunate African race. This opinion is in conformity with views that I have entertained during nearly forty years; and more than once submitted to the public. It was shown in two publications, one twenty-three, the other fifteen years ago, how many strong coincidences seemed to indicate the chastisement of kings and nations, for the impious crimes of the slave trade; and among them the sad destiny of the Sixteenth Louis, whose edicts, immediately before the revolution, had given a new birth and vast extension to the French slave trade. The fate of the Bourbon kings, in this view, should be particularly impressive on all by whom the government of a righteous Providence is not doubted. The dethronement of Louis the Eighteenth, immediately after his final refusal at Vienna to concur in our reformation; Napoleon's return to ordain, with crafty insincerity, that act of justice in his stead; and Louis's restoration, humbly to make *amende honorable* by ratifying the usurper's edict, have been followed by a new indication, precisely of the same kind, in the recent case of France. Charles the Tenth reigned just long enough to evince his broad, though disavowed, toleration of that disclaimed iniquity, as the latest diplomatic correspondence of his minister Polignac with Lord Aberdeen, printed by parliament, will show: and his dethronement and exile have ensued.* The same crime, followed by the same extraordinary penalties, was pointed out by me in the cases of five other sovereigns of slave-trading countries; namely, two successive kings of Spain, two of Portugal, and the prince of Orange; all of which had been preceded by recent new defiances of Almighty justice in solemn adherences to, and extensions of, that

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* A striking incident just related to me by a friend may perhaps be worth notice. A captured French slave-ship dropped anchor at Spithead, nearly at the same time with the ship that convoyed him to our shores.

flagitious traffic. Nor have the guilty senates, or guilty realms been spared. The States General, the Cortes of Spain, the short-lived popular assembly of Portugal, all adhered expressly to the crime; and all soon after shared the vengeance; and in a way too the most appropriate. In their case, also, the subsequent progress of events has tended to confirm those views. Where are now the colonies of Portugal? Where are those of Spain and Holland? Cuba indeed is left to the one, and Surinam to the other; and serve, as remaining theatres, to exhibit their still relentless riot in African misery and blood. Where also are those inconsistent votaries of Spanish freedom, those patriot representatives, who rejected in their Cortes the demands of justice and humanity, when urged by a few enlightened tongues? They solemnly adhered to the slave-trade, just before their beloved Ferdinand returned to scourge them; and they themselves were by a righteous retribution exiled or enslaved.

But our own case, is that which most calls for our attention. In one of the publications I have referred to, the "*Dangers of the Country*," published very early in 1807, much of fact and reasoning were adduced to show the probability, that our then hardened adherence to the slave-trade after many years of admonition, had drawn down upon us the calamities of that long and arduous and seemingly interminable war, the accumulated burthens and dangers of which threatened us with approaching ruin. Our rulers and lawgivers were earnestly exhorted to close without further delay that source of danger, far more alarming to a pious mind, than the then gigantic power of Napoleon, before whom all the nations of Europe but our own lay prostrate — the wrath of the Most High; and a persuasion was declared, that if we relinquished the slave-trade, we should yet, like repenting Nineveh, be spared.

Happily, that reformation a few weeks afterwards took place; and we were rescued, soon and wonderfully rescued, from dangers more alarming than the country had ever known before, and by means not less extraordinary than unforeseen. Napoleon, then at the summit of his power and glory, was, not long after our reformation, led strangely to prepare in Spain and Portugal his own downfall and our deliverance. A field was happily opened to our warlike energies, and the unrivalled

military talents of Wellington. The war became a course of successive triumphs, instead of endless disasters. The infatuation of the march to Moscow followed; and a series of victories crowned by that of Waterloo, gave us at length, what at the time of the abolition seemed perfectly hopeless, a safe and a triumphant peace.

While we acted up in any degree to the principles on which the slave-trade was renounced, the favour of Divine Providence continued manifestly to be with us. Our national prosperity seemed rather to be improved than impaired by the long and arduous struggle we had sustained. Public credit rose to a higher pitch than it had ever before attained; and our commerce and manufactures, in spite of the temporary fluctuations and embarrassments to which they are in their nature always liable, continued on the whole to flourish and increase.

But we have progressively receded from those sacred principles of penitence and reformation, on which the abolition act was founded. We refused, in rejecting the register bill, the necessary means of making its provisions effectual to the relief of the unfortunate slaves, the victims of our former crimes. We omitted not only to give them freedom, but to adopt any effectual means for mitigating the severity, or shortening the duration of their bondage. When measures for those purposes were proposed in parliament, we substituted empty promises and disingenuous evasions, for the performance of sacred indisputable duties. We committed the fate of the oppressed to the discretion of the oppressors. To this hour, hundreds of thousands of helpless fellow-creatures, who owe to our crimes by our own confession all the miseries of a cruel bondage, have obtained from us no relief; and we still entail the same wretched lot upon their unborn posterity. We have even, by a most criminal neglect of legislative duties, suffered the execrable slave-trade itself to pour new victims by multitudes into a colony, which by the victories accorded to our penitence, we were enabled to acquire from our enemies. We have not only retained the spoils of African iniquity in our former colonies, but, in the Mauritius, have relapsed, pervasively at least, into that foul repudiated guilt. We have excited it by our illegal regulations; and not restrained it by our laws.

For all this we have not yet felt the severity of the chastise-

ments we deserve. But the quiver of Divine vengeance is not yet empty. Let us look to our depressed land-owners, our farmers, and agricultural peasants; to our poor laws, our taxes and our debt; to our licentious and seditious periodical press; to the disaffection of our starving labourers, and to the democratical, seditious and levelling spirit that is now boldly stalking abroad among us. Let us also contemplate with awe, those portentous movements on the continent, which have immediately thrown me on these awful reflections. The same identical scourge from the just inflictions of which our penitence delivered us, may soon be felt again.

But I still cherish the hope of better things; and from one source of expectation, which gives a further reason for expediting the publication of this work, and postponing the consideration of any specific means by which slavery may be best abolished. The assembly of the new parliament is at hand, and the motion which Mr. Brougham has pledged himself to bring forward in the next session, will put to a decisive test the disposition of government, and of the house of commons, either to have recourse at length to parliamentary legislation, pursuant to the promise of Mr. Canning, or finally to desert that duty. I say this with no reference to the particular motion, of the form and effect of which I am wholly uninformed, but because enough was said by Mr. Brougham, to show that his object is some immediate exercise of that constitutional right, which, except in the case of taxation, unquestionably belongs to parliament, for the relief or protection of the slaves. His success, therefore, may possibly remove one grand difficulty and embarrassment, which every advocate of anti-slavery principles must now feel in proposing specific measures.

If a mechanic were desired to invent and construct a machine the best fitted to produce a given effect, his first enquiry of course would be, what was to be the moving power; his next, the friction or other resistance to be overcome: and it is not less essential to the right formation of any specific plan for the termination of slavery, to know by what authority it is to be carried into effect, and whether in concert with the West Indian party, or against its will.

As the case now stands, the proper direction of the only power we possess, the popular voice, is sufficiently plain

To me at least, it is perfectly manifest, that it would be very unwise in the friends of the slaves, to propose any measure short of the full demand of justice, a general, entire, immediate restitution of the freedom wrongfully withheld. Whether any thing less should content us for the present, if offered, is a question, on which it would be premature to give an opinion; but if modification or delay is admissible, it should be left to those who resist the just demand, to propose the compromise. He who has to contend for his clear rights before an adverse tribunal, and against a determined opponent, may prejudice the estimation of his cause and his appeal, and embarrass their investigation, but is not likely to put an end to the contest, by any offer of abatements.

More clearly unwise is such conduct in a political controversy, when the only hope of success depends on the influence of the popular voice; and when no concession can be offered that does not tend to divide the opinions of the people, by destroying the simplicity of the question, and to surrender also in some degree the sacred principles, and interesting objects, for which they are contending.

Obvious illustration might here be drawn from the recent case of the catholic claims. But it may be found also in the African cause itself: aye and in the present branches of it too. How hopeless did the abolition of the accursed slave trade appear, while laws, or projects, to regulate its tonnage, or limit its duration, or to confine it to the coast of Northern Africa, or to cut off its foreign branches, or to check it by duties in our colonies, or to prepare for its cessation by such measures of improvement in the colonies as were proposed by Lord Seaford, and the West India Committee for promoting native population there, — distracted the attention, and palsied the right feelings of the people! It was when these wretched temporising expedients, these miserable compromises between God and mammon, between justice and wholesale murder, were superseded and swept away by the bill for the total immediate abolition of the trade, on the simple principle of its gross repugnancy to justice and humanity — it was, I say, when this uncompromising measure was brought forward, that the popular voice in full chorus, sustaining and sustained by such ministers as Lord Grenville, Mr. Fox, and Lord Lans-

down, countervailed all the enormous influence of the colonies, and the slave-trading ports united; and delivered the nation from a load of flagitious wickedness and shame on which it now appals us to look back.

And have we not had the former part of the same lesson repeated in the present controversy, too long delayed, and too long already protracted, as to the affiliated guilt of slavery itself?

I will not say that the resolutions of May 1823, were suggested by West India counsellors to Mr. Canning, for the purpose of dividing opinions, chilling popular feelings by delay, and postponing for an indefinite period, all effectual reformation; still less would I impute to that deceased minister, that he knowingly lent himself to such a purpose. But this has been the undeniable effect; and this, let me add, was the effect which I from the first foresaw and foretold.

Let us not, then, renew the same bad policy. Let us not play the game of the planters for them; a game which they have played too successfully for their own bad views, but fatally for the unfortunate African race, and at the heavy expence of national conscience and honour, during forty years. Let us not fritter down into questions of time, and means, and preparations, and terms, and conditions, and modifications, on which honest opinions may differ, the simple question whether an end shall be put to slavery within the British Colonies; a question, on which all who fear God among us, the self-interested and their grossly deluded partizans excepted, are agreed.

I give this advice, chiefly because many sincere friends of the Anti-Slavery cause have repeatedly suggested to me and others, who have taken a leading part in this controversy, the expediency of asking in our petitions to Parliament for some specific measure, that may immediately be carried into effect; meaning, no doubt, some partial advance towards the great end of general emancipation; such as the enfranchisement of the women, or of the children under a certain age; or the declaring that infants henceforth born in the colonies shall be free.

Each of these measures has had its advocates among us; and the last has recently, if I may credit newspaper authority,

had a precedent which might suffice to put this land of liberty to shame; for the Emperor of Russia is said to have ordained that every child hereafter to be born within his vast dominions shall be free from the birth.

I myself once formed a digested plan, different from all these, and which I preferred to them all, that of abolishing domestic slavery; for this has no excuse real or pretended in any necessity arising from the climate, on which predial slavery is defended, and yet has an infinitely worse effect than that on colonial feelings and manners.

But let it be considered, that from the variety of these plans, a general agreement among the petitioners in selecting any one of them, is not to be expected; and, what is more decisive, a large and highly respectable portion of our friends, and one that I have reason to believe is daily augmenting its proportion to the whole, would feel it inconsistent with the sound principles we maintain, and a violation of their duty as men and Christians, to solicit, or to acquiesce in, any such partial compliance with the clear demands of justice. It would be regarded as a virtual consent to the leaving in slavery for life all to whom the enfranchisement did not extend.

Nor would it be easy to find a satisfactory answer to that objection; for it is never to be forgot, that in this case, the question is not, as in Russia, of altering an hereditary condition, the origin of which being unknown, and of great antiquity, may have been morally lawful (supposing personal bondage of the mildest kind ever to have been so), but of retaining in slavery those whom we placed in it, as our laws and public treaties acknowledge, by gross violations of the first laws of nature and religion; of the sacred principles of justice and humanity; and by practices which we have rightly branded with the dreadful name of piracy.

It is enough, however, for my present purpose, that the multitudes of our fellow-subjects who have declared interminable war with this iniquity, or even those among us who may suppose a partial and temporary toleration of it allowable, are not likely to be unanimous in their choice of the first steps of reformation. Let us, then, in our addresses to the legislature at least, chant that strain in which all our voices

are in unison. The prayer of every petition should be as simple as the demand of Jehovah's messenger to the Egyptian monarch, "LET THE PEOPLE GO."

There is nothing unfair in this to Parliament, or to his Majesty's Government. If there were, I would not recommend it. It is to the principle or object of any public measure, that the prayers of the people are most properly and usefully directed. Practical means, and modifications, when necessary, are best left to the deliberations of parliament, or the wisdom of the ministers by whom they ought to be concerted or proposed.

And here let me briefly, but strongly, protest, against the bad and singular course which many successive administrations have taken, in relation to this most momentous controversy. Neutrality may, no doubt, be very convenient to any cabinet, when there is a strong popular feeling on one side of the question, and particular interests, strongly supported by parliamentary votes and personal influence, on the other: but this is a cause in which the government cannot justifiably be neutral, or leave to members who have no official responsibility, the initiation of such measures as ought to be proposed to parliament. It is to pursue what I will not scruple to call the very reprehensible policy of Mr. Pitt, under circumstances of a very different kind, and such as render it far less excusable, and more unsafe. While the question of abolishing the slave-trade was yet *sub judice*, the course was at least morally wrong; but after that great question was decided in the affirmative, it became a highly political, as well as moral duty of the government, to adhere to, and follow up, the sacred principles of that reformation, and provide against the inconveniences and dangers that might flow from it, by a correspondent change of system in the colonies.

The nation had taken its part. We stood committed before Europe and all the civilized world, to abide by the principles, as well as the practice, of the abolition. We had invited, urged, and importuned, other nations to adopt our penitential views, and follow our example. Retrogression, therefore, was impossible, without ineffable disgrace; and not to go

forward, by making to the suffering victims of our crimes all possible amends, was to desert the principles, impair the future credit, and spoil the effects, of reformation.

Nor was the wisdom, less impeachable than the consistency and justice, of treating the case as one in which the executive government and the state had no further duties to perform. It was like the conduct of a surgeon who, after amputating a limb, should wholly neglect his patient, leaving the cure to nature, or to the management of ignorant servants; nay, it was worse by far; for in this case the patient was in the hands of persons who had obstinately opposed the operation, who still hated and reviled its authors, and desired nothing less than an effectual and creditable cure.

If there ever was a rational hope that the colonial assemblies, or planters themselves would perform in our stead, the duty of reparation to their slaves, or that of so correcting the inveterate abuses of their system as to preserve and increase the existing black population, and prepare, speedily, in free labour, a substitute for servile discipline and force, that hope was soon at an end; and was frustrated by the very conduct I here condemn.

The rejection of the Register Bill, was a death-blow to the vital principles which alone could give birth to voluntary reformation, by planters or their delegates, of such a system as is here described; namely, the certainty that no other means licit or illicit of maintaining their agriculture remained, or would hereafter be found; and the apprehension that if they did not perform the work themselves, it would be soon taken out of their hands by parliament.

And here let me complain of a disingenuous attempt to impeach the consistency of my views, as to the necessary and proper means of reformation, to which my opponents have repeatedly resorted. I had said, in a work published in 1816, called "*Reasons for establishing a Registry of Slaves*," that the abolition party "had not aimed at an emancipation to be "effected by insurrection in the West Indies, or to be or"dained precipitately by positive law, as their opponents had "alleged; but to a future extinction of slavery in the colo"nies, by the same happy means which put an end to it in "England; namely, by a benign, though insensible revolution

" in opinions and manners, by the encouragement of particu-
" lar manumissions, and the progressive melioration of the
" condition of the slaves, till it should slide insensibly into
" general freedom; that we looked to an emancipation, of
" which not the slaves, but the masters, should be the willing
" instruments or authors."

These words have been twenty times cited against me; and not merely by the hireling apologists of slavery, but my more respectable antagonists. Even Lord Seaford, if I mistake not, once quoted them in parliament. But in no one instance has the context, or the occasion been noticed, or even the publication named; because, no doubt, its very title would have indicated that the passage referred to hopes that had been already frustrated by the rejection of the Register Bill. The whole scope of the section containing it, was to show that by the recession of government and parliament, in that instance, from the principle of the abolition, the only motives which could have been powerful enough in the breasts of the planters to produce such happy effects, were fatally taken away. I maintained then, as now, that to so happy a change, " a great
" diminution of labour, especially among the females, was
" essentially necessary; also a more liberal and expensive
" sustentation of the slaves in general, a more chargeable
" care of infants and invalids, and some other additions to
" the annual disbursements upon an estate, of which the pro-
" duce at the same time was to be diminished," (see p. 14, and the pamphlet at large,) and I showed the hopelessness of such sacrifices being made, while every hope of eluding the abolition, or of its principles not being strictly acted up to by the mother country, was not extinguished in the minds both of the planters and their creditors. To quote the expectations I professed to have before entertained against me, withholding the assigned cause of their disappointment, was about as fair as to condemn a physician, whose prognosticated cure had failed, sinking the fact that the patient had thrown his medicines away, and reversed the course he prescribed.

Lord Bathurst had once the candour, and the kindness to say of me, in a debate on these subjects in the house of lords, that I was one of the most consistent of the friends of the slaves; and after this explanation, I shall not fear to for-

feit that praise, when I still hold that the rejection of the Register Bill, and the truckling of the mother country to the assemblies which ensued, and our acceptance of their mock enactments as substitutes for that measure, though manifestly calculated wholly to frustrate the designed effect, were subversive of the only motives from which voluntary reformations could possibly arise.*

Instead of those urgent motives for the large sacrifices of present gain, which the planters had to make in the reduction of labour, and increase of subsistence, a conviction was fatally established among them, that they might, by resolute adherence to the existing system, finally maintain it; and regain, when necessary, by connivance, at least, the resource of the slave-trade itself. They found, by experience, that the sacred principles of the abolition were powerless in the cabinet, and in parliament, when opposed by clamour from the colonies, and West Indian influence at home.

From that moment I regarded our great cause as ruined and lost — lost in its African, as well as its West Indian and American interests; for I had always thought colonial reformation necessary to give stability even to our own abolition, and still more to secure its effectual adoption by the other colonizing powers: I felt that, as a faithful friend of the cause, and one peculiarly committed by avowed opinions, as to the necessity of slave registration, I had, like Francis, after the battle of Pavia, my honour only to save; and was determined to save it, by the only expedient left to me, under the painful circumstances of the peculiar position I was placed in, — retiring from parliamentary life.

But the neutrality and the supineness of government, it may be said, have since been relinquished. Mr. Canning, more than seven years ago, thought it proper for the administration to be active, and to propose parliamentary resolutions for the mitigation and progressive termination of slavery.

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* See my two Letters to Mr. Wilberforce, in defence of the Register Bill, and my printed Speeches at two general meetings of the African Institution, on the 26th March, 1817, and the 16th May, 1823; and a Report of the Institution on the Register Acts; in all of which these same views of the subject were maintained.

True; but with an abandonment, or indefinite postponement, of the only means by which they could possibly be carried into effect. Till a refusal by the assemblies in such a mode as might amount to direct contumacy, they were not more at rest than before, if possible, from all apprehension of any legislative interposition by parliament.

If that case has not since arisen, it is impossible to conceive how it can ever arise. To pass over the long continued noncompliance with the specific recommendations of the crown founded on the resolutions of May 1823, the express and reiterated rejection of most of them, nay, of all that were of any importance; and the disrespectful, indignant terms with which all the expostulations of ministers or governors have been received; the Jamaica Assembly has recently twice insulted the crown and parliament, by attempting to extort a surrender of the royal negative (which in the colonies has always been a prerogative of frequent and necessary use), as the price of any advance, however slight or immaterial, towards the measures which, in pursuance of the parliamentary resolutions, were recommended from the throne.

In its eager desire to obtain a legal sanction for persecuting and driving away the pious Methodist and Baptist missionaries who are endeavouring to impart Christian instruction to the slaves of that colony, a clause most effectual for that odious purpose was grafted on a new slave act, containing a few trivial new provisions against some of the oppressions which parliament desired to reform; and when the act was disallowed for that cause, the assembly re-enacted and transmitted it again *totidem verbis*; thus virtually saying to his majesty, you shall either, on our dictation, give your sanction to a persecuting law, contrary to your conscience, and to the constitutional and sacred principle of religious toleration; or leave our slave laws where they stood, in total opposition to the voice of parliament.

Of course the act has been again disallowed. Bold indeed, as well as bad, would have been any minister who could have advised the contrary; and regardless of his duty, not only to the unfortunate slaves, but to his royal master; for such an insult has not been offered to any king of this coun-

try since the parliament bearded the unfortunate Charles repeatedly with bills for abolishing episcopacy.

If this be not contumacious resistance to the measures which parliament instead of ordaining, stooped to recommend, I would desire to know what possible conduct can deserve that name. All former excuses for non-compliance are dropped, or rather practically excluded, by the assembly itself; to the extent at least of the proposed enactments. We can no longer be told that they are dangerous, or otherwise objectionable in their object; or that the local legislature is the best judge of the time and manner in which the proposed improvements should be made; for both in substance and form, and in season also, the work is its own. The slaves, it is admitted, are so far now entitled to a few of the alleviations of their temporal lot that parliament has asked in their favour; and the question is reduced to this, whether, as the price of such paltry concessions, their chief if not their only hope of religious instruction, on which parliament was mainly intent, shall be extinguished, through an insolent dictation of persecuting enactments to the crown.

To acquiesce in this audacious proceeding, would be more than a surrender of the right and duty of parliamentary legislation. It would be a virtual abolition also of the royal negative; and an admission of a right in the colonial assemblies to make laws without the concurrence of the third estate.

Nor even with such usurpation, would these presumptuous colonists be content. The executive authority, as well as the legislative prerogative, of the crown must fall down before the triumphant cart-whip. It is impossible for any man who has the feelings of an Englishman in his breast, to regard, without disgust and humiliation, the way in which these slave masters treat the king's ministers, whenever they presume to interpose in their sovereign's name, in the exercise of his unquestionable right and sacred duty, to provide for the due execution of the laws, on behalf of their unfortunate slaves. In the last case of the kind that has appeared before the public, that of the prosecution of the Reverend Mr. Bridges, for cruelly flogging a female slave of whom he was master and owner, for a most trivial imputed offence, Sir George Murray on a complaint to him that a court of magistrates (there called a council of slave protec-

tors), had been wanting in their official duty; a majority of them having prevented a prosecution which four of their own body, though all planters of the island, had thought due to humanity and justice, wrote officially to the governor for information on the subject; and directed that the protectors should be applied to for a copy of the examinations taken before them; and that they should be laid before the attorney-general of the island, in order that he might institute a prosecution on the part of the crown, if he were of opinion that the case required it. A letter more inoffensive, more guarded, delicate and courteous towards the protectors, and even towards the reverend offender himself, could not possibly have been framed by the right honourable secretary of state, consistently with his official duties. He wrote even like a man who disbelieved that there was any just cause of complaint; and who invited, rather than demanded, explanations, for the sake of the magistrates themselves, and the clergyman accused. Yet his enquiry was resented by the honourable official protectors, with what they properly described as "*deep indignation.*" The right honourable secretary was most disrespectfully and wrathfully rebuked in their published resolutions, as having been guilty of "*a gross violation of their just rights.*" He was accused of "*irritating and wounding the feelings of the magis-*" *trates of the colony,*" and of "attempting to establish an *in-*" *quisitorial jurisdiction over their proceedings, by means hitherto* " *confined, among civilized nations, to the unhallowed cloisters* " *of the inquisition.*" *

With these invectives, extravagant and preposterous though they are, the feelings of the Jamaica people in general appear to have warmly sympathised. They hold, therefore, that to promote, or watch over, the due execution of the laws, is no part of the duties or rights of the crown in the colonies.

It is with the legislative usurpation and contumacy, however, that parliament has now to deal. The case defined by

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* See the Resolutions of the Protectors, and the Letter of Sir George Murray, as published in the newspapers of the island, and copied from them in the Anti-Slavery Reporter for September. 1830. It may be collected from the newspaper accounts, that the desired information was refused: but the attorney-general having obtained such evidence as seemed to him to require a prosecution, afterwards preferred a bill of indictment, which was thrown out by the grand jury.

Mr. Canning has most unequivocally arisen; and if tame acquiescence is still to be the rule, his pledge, and the authority of the supreme legislature, must be foreclosed together.

If the frivolous advances towards legal reformations contained in the disallowed act were worth acceptance, an obvious and unobjectionable course would be to transcribe its enactments literally into a bill to amend the slave laws of Jamaica; omitting only the persecuting clauses. Such a bill could be opposed by the colonial party, only upon two grounds; the one that of denying the right of parliamentary legislation, in which I do not believe that any man who has a character to lose in the country, either as a statesman, a constitutionalist, a lawyer, or a man of sense, would venture to support them; the other that the sacred principle of religious toleration is in this case to be violated; on which I doubt, whether they would find any general support even by their own party. On either ground, I should wish much to come to an issue with them before the British public.

But it is a course which I cannot recommend; because it would be a shock to the feelings of the country, a disgrace to our statute book, and an indelible record of the prevalence of colonial influence over our national justice, liberality, and humanity in this enlightened age, if the many opprobrious clauses contained in the same act, for the restraint and punishment of slaves, and the many recognitions of the odious features of the system, even in the provisions which affect to controul abuses of the master's power, should find their way into a British act of parliament. Hitherto, our laws have noticed and sanctioned slavery only in the abstract use of the term, which, though bad enough, falls far short, to common apprehension at least, of recognizing and confirming in detail, all its shameful elements and adjuncts. But here, with many of my readers, explanation may be wanted. It has been the policy of the assemblies, especially that of Jamaica, ever since the commencement of their crafty expedients, first to prevent the abolition of the African slave-trade, and afterwards the interposition of parliament for the reformation of slavery, to embody their ostensible enactments for the protection of slaves, in what are called *consolidated acts*, containing the whole of their positive slave codes; with the intent

that the crown should not be able to accept the mitigations, without allowing or ratifying all the severities, of the system. The practice was begun in 1788, by the Jamaica Consolidated Act of that year; and has been adhered to ever since upon every alteration, however trivial, of the existing law; and under cover of it, some oppressive innovations, such as those of the act now in controversy, have been slid in, unobserved, I presume, amidst a mass of heterogeneous enactments, by former advisers of the crown.

I will not waste the time of my readers by adducing any further facts or arguments, to shew that if any thing is ever to be done for the effectual relief of the slaves, on the termination of their bondage, in the colonies which are cursed with legislative assemblies at least, it must be by the direct authority of parliament. Still less will I enter on the tedious task of reviewing the various orders in council by which some weak attempts have have been made to mitigate, in a small degree, the oppressions and mischiefs of the system, in colonies under the legislative government of the crown. It is a work that has been well performed by fellow-labourers whose industry and talents far exceed my own;* and I will be content with adding the testimony of my opinion to theirs, that nothing of any material value has been accomplished, even in Trinidad and Demerara; though the county resolutions there, are proposed as examples which other colonies are desired to follow, and even for the effects of which it is proper for us to wait. Were protecting slave laws, whether emanating from the assemblies, or from royal ordinances, adequate in their provisions and their sanctions, it would be of little avail while the crown is represented in the West Indies, by governors who take the easy and profitable part of falling in with, rather than the difficult and disadvantageous one of opposing, the prejudices and bad habits of the communities over which they preside; and while the immediate duty of executing such laws, is left, almost exclusively, to the planters themselves.

The truth must be told. West Indian influence has always

* See the Anti-slavery Reporters, No. 1, 11, 34 and 58.

been irresistibly predominant, not only in parliament, but in the councils of the crown, and in all the departments of state, and has governed, with rare exceptions, the appointment to all offices, ecclesiastical or civil in the sugar colonies, whether the patronage of them is delegated to the governors, or retained in the offices at home.

Let it not, however, be taken as my opinion, that the best and happiest choice of public officers, under any laws that can be framed, would effect much good in the protection of slaves against their masters. I hold, and have ever held, that from the nature of the harsh and terrible relation, the interposition of the civil magistrate is impotent to restrain its abuses; and I doubt much whether on the whole it would not have been better for those wretched dependants on another's will, if protecting laws had never been made. They may have prevented, occasionally, outrages that would have soon released a poor victim of cruelty from all his human sufferings; but I believe that they have been the cause of many stripes for one that they have prevented, without even taking into account those in which the magistrate has been strangely made ancillary to the master's vengeance, by public whippings adjudged on the pretence of false complaints. As to the great standing oppressions of over-working and under-feeding, no meliorating act or royal ordinance has, to my knowledge, made any provision for restraining them, capable of being carried into effect; nor can I conceive how any effectual law for that purpose could possibly be framed.

While, then, for these reasons, I forbear to propose, for the present, any particular mode or time for the abolition of slavery, I am fully prepared to say that by its abolition alone can the evils of the state be removed; and that no measure which has not emancipation, general or particular, immediate or future, for its direct object, is worth solicitation or acceptance. Nothing of that kind has been hitherto attempted, even in crown colonies, beyond the privilege of self-redemption, if they can find means to pay the full amount of their value as slaves; a perfect mockery to the poor drudges of the field, and available to very few indeed, even among those who are much less objects of compassion. If nothing more, then, is

to be done towards enfranchisement, I think the case, bad and opprobrious as it is, had better be left where it stands.

As to further solicitation of the assemblies, *with whom the West India Committee has now publicly declared common cause, against the whole principle of manumission without the master's consent*, it would not only be vain and degrading to parliament, but highly dangerous; and even on behalf of the poor slaves themselves, the sure victims of insurrection, I would strongly protest against it. It is really trying their temper too severely, to renew every year before them, discussions as interesting and exciting as ever agitated the human breast, in which they uniformly find the voice of the king and parliament advocating their relief; and their masters relentlessly opposing it, on pretences which they know to be false. I never read a Jamaica newspaper, containing the debates on these subjects in its assembly, without astonishment that fatal effects have not already ensued from them; though I know the patient and prostrate spirit of the enslaved negroes, under wrongs from their masters and white persons in general, almost to exceed belief.

That those who permit, and administer such extreme excitement, should complain of discussions of the same kind before the British parliament and public, lest they should reach the ears of their slaves, and dispose them to sedition, is, to be sure, not very consistent or modest; but on their views, natural and wise. To deprecate discussion here, is, in other words, to require of the advocates of the slaves a final abandonment of their cause. But while we protest against any responsibility for such discussions, where they are utterly useless, we will never, they may rest assured, desist from them here, where they are the only possible means by which we can hope to redeem our oppressed fellow-subjects from bondage, or our country from guilt. They may, by the clamours of their loud-tongued brethren and partizans in parliament, cry down discussion there, where, as that truly estimable, faithful, and able friend of our cause, Dr. Lushington, now alas a member no more! declared, at our last public meeting, no anti-slavery tongue but Mr. Brougham's can obtain a hearing; and they may continue, by the lavish use of West

India money, and by personal interest and intimidation from their wide-spread party, to exclude our information and strictures from the most influential part of the metropolitan press: but we have means, nevertheless, to make ourselves heard through the country at large; and the national voice, responsive to the call of religion, justice, and humanity, will second our appeals to parliament, in louder and still louder strains, and without remission, till our legislators shall effectually listen to it, and "*let the people go.*"

Nevertheless, I am far from thinking that such long protracted discussions, even in the mother country, fruitless as they have hitherto been of reformation, are unaccompanied with danger. They teem with an evil which no true friend of his country can regard without deep regret, nor any prudent British statesman, at this juncture, without alarm. They tend powerfully to spread discontent with our frame of government, through the soundest part of the community; and to reconcile good men, and those who fear God among us, to hazardous innovations; for who can deny or doubt, that a purer and less aristocratical constitution of parliament, would long since have given victory to those sacred principles supported by the popular voice, which are now trampled down by the weight of colonial wealth and influence.

May my anticipations be wrong! but I fear that times are at hand, in which the government, and the higher and wealthier classes in the state, will stand more than ever in need of that best human safe-guard of social order, the moral and religious feelings of the people: and so very generally are those feelings now engaged in the cause of the colonial slaves (I might truly say almost universally, among the multitudes, never, so great as now, who are zealous in their faith as Christians), that a more revolting shock could not be given to them, than to find their petitions to the new parliament ineffectual.

I shall not live to see the issue of those portentous storms that appear to be now gathering in our political horizon, unless they are very brief indeed; but as a father and grandfather, and an ardent lover of my country, I cannot but feel an anxious interest in the result; especially when I regard the unprecedented dangers of our interior situation. May He in whose hands

are the fates of nations, and who "teaches senators wisdom," still continue to us his providential protection and favour. But that we may not deservedly forfeit them, may we comply with what perhaps may otherwise be the last call to penitence and reformation. May parliament at length consent to "*undo the heavy burthen, and let the oppressed go free.*"

APPENDIX.

CASES OF CRUELTY, INDICATING THE GENERAL PREVALENCE IN THE SUGAR COLONIES OF INSENSIBILITY TO THE SUFFERINGS OF SLAVES, AND AN INDISPOSITION TO RESTRAIN OR PUNISH THE AUTHORS OF SUCH OFFENCES.

To exhibit instances of particular cruelties towards slaves in the exercise of the master's power of punishment, was no part of my plan in this work, or any other of my publications on slavery. I have declined such topics in general; but not because I deem them either improper or useless. They are fairly illustrative of that odious branch of the system, which commits to every master and his delegates, powers which ought to be intrusted only to the civil magistrate; and subjects the slaves for every domestic offence, real or imputed, to punishments more ignominious and severe than are here inflicted for any but felonious crimes.

To doubt the very frequent and cruel abuse of such powers, would be to question whether human nature retains its ordinary frailty and peccability in the West Indies; or is not exempted from all its bad passions, by the mere habit of governing slaves. But I have, therefore, thought that the multitudinous sufferings and crimes necessarily flowing from this source, though examples of them have, perhaps, the most powerful influence on the feelings of the British people at large, might be safely left to the reflections of intelligent and reasoning minds, to which, exclusively, I have wished to address myself in these volumes; and I have consequently stated or noticed such particular fruits of the system as I have delineated, only when they served to support or elucidate some abstract reasoning, or some general remark.

If I depart from the rule in the present supplementary paper, it is, in the first place, because some of my antagonists have challenged me to do so, and taken advantage of my abstinence, to infer from it that I have confined myself to some instances of cruelties of an old date, only because no more recent examples of it were to be found; in the next place, because the colonial party has lately had the effrontery to address a paper, in which my name is implicated, to that most respectable and justly influential part of the community, the regular clergy of the realm, with an attempt to persuade them that cruelty, in the punishment of slaves, is a non-existent abuse, and

that the examples adduced of it, which have been published, are all false and malicious inventions, of which I am a principal author.

Mr. Barclay, in his pretended answer to my former volume, thus defies me as to the production of any recent cases of cruelty:—"He tells us in his preface that he has a copious 'collection of particular instances of cruelty and oppression.'—p. 44. We hope he will publish them, with the names and authorities on which they rest, that they may, if possible, be investigated, and that it may be seen what credit is due to his general charges, by an examination of the individual cases from which they are drawn. But we are doubtful if a second volume is really intended, or if this is only an artifice. Having charged the colonists with every term of reproach that language affords, he promises another volume, merely, perhaps, to have it believed that, after all, he has told only half their crimes."—Barclay, p. 298, 299. I shall convince this antagonist and his employers, perhaps, that this defiance had been better withheld.

But the first attention is due to that modest appeal to the clergy, to which I have adverted. It is contained in a printed circular of fifteen pages, craftily intitled "*Cruelties of West India Slavery at this moment, by an Eye Witness;*" which I understand has been transmitted, postage paid, to every beneficed parochial clergyman, and I am told also to every dissenting minister in the kingdom, at an expence, as is estimated, of more than a thousand, probably as much as two thousand pounds. Several of my reverend friends in the Church have sent their copies to me, conceiving, I suppose, that it required an answer.

It is not in such a mode of costly correspondence that I can contend for the opinions of that much respected body against the enormous West India purse, which is supplied by a "*slavery rent*," from every article of colonial produce imported into this country, for influencing our periodical press, and perverting the opinions of the British people on these subjects. Nor has the Anti-Slavery Society sufficient means of assisting me in such a contest; for the pecuniary contributions to our cause (from a reliance on its moral and intrinsic strength, no doubt) have always been contemptibly small. With the bulk of the clergy, therefore, I must rely on their own unaided reflections to defeat this ingenious attempt. But my readers shall not be left unassisted by some of the remarks which it calls for.

The case was that Mr. George Hamilton Smith, an Irish gentleman, who having been appointed to the office of comptroller of the customs at Savanah la Mar, Jamaica, wrote very soon after his arrival there, a letter to his brother, a beneficed clergyman in Ireland, expressing his horror at the wretched condition and cruel treatment of the slaves in that country; and detailing several instances of shocking barbarities towards female slaves, one of which his own eyes and ears had witnessed. His brother, not aware of the extreme danger to which such communications would expose the writer, sent it to the press, but without a name, and it appeared in the Morning Chronicle of October 8, 1829.

In describing the general condition and treatment of plantation slaves, under the drivers, Mr. Smith had availed himself of two or three passages in my former volume, using my very words, but without making them as a quotation; the most probable solution of which is that having, as it appears been bred a seaman, and being evidently not much used to composi-

tion, and finding those passages exactly descriptive of what he saw to be the actual case, as to the driving method, and some other general facts, he found it easier to use my language, than to find equivalent descriptive terms of his own. This might be disingenuous perhaps towards his brother; but nothing could more clearly shew that the letter was not meant to meet the public eye; and that neither I, nor any of the friends I act with, could have been privy to its publication. He and his brother too were, in fact, utter strangers to us all.

The consequence was natural and inevitable. The colonial party here immediately arraigned the letter, as a forgery got up in this country by their anti-slavery opponents; but the brother, whose respectability was known or certified to the editor, solemnly attested its authenticity, though still properly withholding the name.

On the arrival of the paper in Jamaica, and its republication in a newspaper there, suspicion fell on the luckless writer; by what means is not distinctly told, but presumably from the coincidence of the particular acts of cruelty he had narrated, with cases that he was known to have witnessed: and from some of the gentlemen implicated, though their names were left blank in the published letter, knowing themselves to be meant.

Two of these forthwith called on him for explanations; and he says in the letter next mentioned, "I do not expect it will end here, as —— and —— "seem much hurt." He confessed himself to be the author, protesting what no thinking man can doubt, "that the letter was written confidentially to a brother, and was never intended for the public eye;" and he added, that "the "principal part of what alluded to one of the gentlemen and others, was in- "correct.* A third gentleman to whom the letter had manifestly pointed, was his particular friend and official superior, the collector of the customs at the same port, to whom he had imputed, however, nothing culpable, but what the collector long resident in the island, knew to be infinitely dangerous to himself, the having suggested or confirmed to him some of his views, as to the ordinary cruel treatment of slaves; and the disinclination of the magistrates to do their duty in restraining it.

To this gentleman he wrote a confidential letter, asking his advice and assistance in his distressing situation, and said in it. "If you would ap- "prove of it, (and I hope I am not asking too much of you to be my friend "on this occasion,) I don't think there would be any thing implicating my "honour in your giving publicity, as from me to something like the follow- "ing, — stating that two gentlemen of the town had just called on me to

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* To estimate fairly the motive of such concessions it should be observed, that it was not merely the feelings of the gentleman alluded to which he had to heal. It was necessary to screen him from the indignation of a whole community, for having in distinguishing his own conduct from that of other planters in his merciful restrictions on his drivers, impliedly confirmed the offensive statements as to the general practice. (See the third page of the circular.) Let those who condemn Mr. S. here for want of firmness in the cause of truth, reflect how they themselves would act, if, from their own indiscretion in revealing private conversation, they stood in the painful dilemma of either qualifying insincerely what they had said, or subjecting the person who had spoken to them confidentially to distressing consequences. I say not that Mr. Smith chose the best alternative; but defence is one thing, mitigation another.

" know, if I was the author of the paragraph alluded to. On casting my " eyes over it, I immediately admitted that I was, but on perusing it through, " I totally disown many allusions therein; but that it was never intended to " get publicity; and that no offence was meant *individually, but what I said* " *was against slavery itself.*"

The poor man seems not then to have been aware, that private resentment was not the sole or worst evil he had to apprehend, and that his account " of slavery itself," or "*the system of slavery in general,*" as he variously called it, would be regarded by the community as a crime of which truth would be no mitigation. The collector was, however, much better informed, and, therefore, saw at once that the only way to save himself, was to abandon his unfortunate friend, and instead of protecting him against the approaching persecution, make a merit of exposing him to it. He immediately took that course, and proclaimed it to the public in a letter to the editor of the Jamaica Courant; which, with Mr. Smith's confidential one to himself, was published in that paper of December 16th. I take from it the preceding facts. After many remarks well suited to conciliate the planters, he says " in justice to this country, and in justice to myself and family, I had " but one straight course to pursue, the first part of which was to shew the " original letter to as many influential persons as possible. I did so this " afternoon; and it was read in the house. The next is to hand it to you " and request its insertion in your columns."

Immediately the unfortunate man found himself involved in a storm of private and public indignation, enough to make the stoutest of human hearts tremble. A general meeting of the inhabitants of the parish of Westmoreland where he resided, was convened on the 17th of December 1829. The senior magistrate presided; and speech after speech of gentlemen, the most formidable for their local importance, vied with each other in holding him forth as an object of public indignation, a slanderer of the whole community, an enemy to the West Indies, an emissary of the anti-slavery society, a man who must be sent to Coventry, complained of to the board of trade, and driven from the island.

A friend, who hoped, that by disclaiming all intention of making the letter public, he might soften the general resentment, persuaded him to attend the meeting. He did so; and I am sure no man who has a spark of liberality or compassion in his breast, can read the account of the proceedings (which I now have before me in a supplement to the Royal Gazette of the island, of January 2d, 1830) unmoved. They hoped to intimidate him into a retractation of all that he had stated in the letter; but without success? Not one of his general accounts of the system, nor the particular facts stated on his own knowledge, were admitted to have been false.

As to the shocking case of cruel punishment which he had himself beheld, by far the most impressive part of the letter to English feelings, he expressly adhered to it; for he said, " I wrote under the influence of powerful excite- " ment occasioned *by witnessing the punishment of a female.*"

" *I certainly do not disavow,* (he said), *I will never disavow my letter. I* " *can only state on the veracity of a gentleman that, though I stated in my* " *letter what I then thought correct, there are parts of it which are not quite* " *consistent with my present knowledge; and that is all I can admit.*"

The facts alluded to as not "quite consistent with his then knowledge," are not specified here, or in a former address that he made to the meeting; but probably were less of a general than particular kind, and such as had given most umbrage to individuals; or exposed them most to share in his misfortune.

He then wished to be allowed to go; but they detained him, in the hope no doubt to make him a little more retractive, he persisted, however, in his wish to depart, and was at length allowed to do so.

They then proceeded to appoint a committee, before which Mr. Smith was brought and examined; and his examination, or rather severe cross-examination, is reported in a postscript to the same gazette.

The compilers of the circular to the clergy did not find it for their purpose to notice this document, or any part of the parochial proceedings that preceded and followed; and I will not extend these sheets by inserting them fully here, but the examination contains no admission of any wilful misrepresentation in the letter, or of any thing inconsistent with its truth, unless the following passage can be deemed such "he acknowledged, that he was in "an error in the following, 'that the negroes are in the habit of laying open "the flanks of oxen and mules at a single stroke (i. e. of the cart-whip,) "which, if known by their overseers, would be punished, but in the case of "a negro it would be passed over with impunity; and admitted that he "had adopted Mr. Stephen's opinion on that subject, and did not think "from his present longer residence in this country, that such an act in re-"spect of a negro would be passed over with impunity."

The fact is that Mr. Stephen had said no such thing. The passage alluded to is in my first volume, p. 49. where in noticing the tremendous powers of that merciless, though ordinary instrument of correction, I said "a planter who valued himself on his humanity, once pointed out to me a "driver of his, then passing by, as a man whose strength of arm and adroit-"ness in the use of his whip, were more than commonly great, and who had "also a cruel disposition. I once actually saw the fellow, (said he,) lay open "the flank of a mule he was driving, cutting fairly through the tough hide "at a single stroke." He added that he had punished him for it, and that it "was his general injunction to him, and the other drivers, not to *cut* the ne-"groes in their whippings, upon pain of being laid down and flogged them-"selves!! *Cutting* I explained does not mean merely drawing blood and "peeling off the scarf skin, for those are the effects of almost every stripe on the "naked body with this instrument, however leniently applied; but it means "cutting through the *cutis* or true skin into the muscles or flesh below, and "this is so usual in cart-whipping, when regularly inflicted for a serious "fault, that confinement to the hospital during the cure is an ordinary con-"sequence, and large scars or weals remain during the life of the patient! "To be exempt from such vestiges of severe punishments received, is re-"garded as a distinction creditable to the character of a plantation slave, "and enhancing his value to a purchaser."

Though it will be seen that this did not warrant the statement that negroes were "*in the habit of laying open the flanks of oxen and mules,*" but plainly the reverse; still less, that if they so treated "*slaves, it would be passed over with impunity.*" Mr. Smith might, perhaps, have innocently,

though carelessly, so understood it; for the difference is chiefly in its not being within the driver's licence to *cut*, as I described the term, except when the punishment is "*regularly inflicted*, and for *a serious fault*." I meant of course, here, punishments by the master's order.

As to my statement of the general practice, it did not rest on my own credit; but was supported, like every thing else I advanced, by decisive quoted authorities; and I have added to them in p. 19—24 of the present volume. If further authority be still desired, the reader will find it abundantly in the sequel to this Appendix. It appears, also, that Mr. Smith did not rely on my authority, and that of the writers I had quoted alone; for he said elsewhere, in this same examination, in reference to the punishments of negroes, "he had taken his opinion, "partly from Mr. Stephen's work, and *partly from the opinion of people in* "*this island*, but declined giving the names." It certainly would have been not only a violation of confidence, but of common humanity, if he had not declined it. Besides, he throughout adhered to the statement, that short though his residence had been, he had been an eye and ear-witness of some of those merciless punishments; especially the one described in his letter. He added, that though, as to severe flogging and lacerating, he had not been near enough to examine whether any infliction was to "the extent "mentioned in the letter, he had seen severe punishments, among the work-"house negroes particularly, and which was the occasion once of Mr. —— "finding fault with the work-house driver for such infliction—that he had "heard slave owners say that they had employed the work-house drivers to "punish their domestic slaves; and that he had never complained to a ma-"gistrate of ill-treatment of a slave, in consequence of the information he "had received; that he would not obtain redress, but declined to say from "whom he had received such information; but had once mentioned to a "magistrate, as a matter of conversation, what he considered a severe in-"stance of punishment; but that the reply was, it was not an illegal "infliction."

The committee, having obtained nothing from his examination more for their purpose than this, proceeded to fulminate against him a string of tremendous resolutions in their report, one of which marks their candour and consistency so strongly that it is worth extracting.

Resolved—"That *Mr. Smith's subsequent declaration, that he never in-*"*tended this letter to be published, so far from being an extenuation, is an* "*aggravation of the offence; inasmuch as it evinces an assassin-like disposi-*"*tion to inflict a wound under the presumed security of concealment.*"

How this is to be reconciled with the general strain of all their invectives, the treating him as an emissary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and imputing to him a design publickly to discredit the colonists with their fellow-countrymen of Great Britain, I must leave the reader to discover.

But the unfortunate gentleman's persecution did not end here. To finish his consternation, the assembly took up the case with great vehemence, as an outrageous, unpardonable offence against the whole community; and appointed a committee, the motion for which was carried by acclamation. Before this enraged and awful tribunal, first his quondam friend the collector, and afterwards, but with a long interval, he himself

were brought. And it is with the evidence taken before this committee, sinking the previous facts which I have told, that the authors of the circular thought it expedient to take up the case. The examinations of the collector and comptroller are set forth at large; and my readers will not be surprised to hear that the former was as favourable to the character of the colony, in regard to the general imputations on it, though not in regard to all the poor comptroller's facts, as the committee could well desire. Both had been loudly menacedwith complaints to the board of trade, and, as family men, the fear of dismission from office was hardly less formidable, perhaps, than the general indignation of the colony. It was the business of both to make their peace at any price, if possible; for the newspapers of the island shew that their official situations were regarded as greatly enhancing the crime of defaming the colony; and that the assembly was expected to use its ordinary too successful remonstrances with his Majesty's government, for their dismission.

But with all these advantages on the part of the committee, these examinations are liable to one important remark, which, I trust, has not escaped the notice of intelligent readers. The *veracity of Mr. Smith, as to the particular cases of cruelty, he had stated, on his own knowledge, was not impeached by them, or by anyother evidence that the committee thought fit to report;* but rather sufficiently confirmed.

The cases specified in the letter are but two; both which had fallen under his own observation, during his brief residence of about three months at Savannah le Mar. One was stated in the following words:—"In the house "we live in there is a very interesting little girl, of about eighteen years of "age, who has lost an eye by the blow of a whip from her mistress; but "you may be sure not since I came here." In respect of this, the committee did not venture to put any question to the collector, except to ascertain the name of the mistress alluded to, which he furnished, but said nothing more. They afterwards invoked evidence taken before a council of protection, to which the case had, subsequently to these proceedings, been referred; and taking that evidence for true and impartial, it amounted to no more than this, that though the eye was actually lost by a blow received with a cat or whip from her mistress, it probably arose from the accidental recoil of the whip upon the eye. One witness said, that "from what he knew of the mis-"tress, he was satisfied that she could not have done it intentionally," and a gentleman, from whom it appeared that Mr. Smith received his information as to the cause of the eye being lost, said "he never said any thing to "induce him to believe that it occurred otherwise than accidentally," which he himself believed to have been the case. But he did not add that he told Mr. Smith of this belief. Mr. Smith himself was examined, and said the girl herself had told him, "she lost her eye from the lick of a whip from "her mistress," and that when he asked the last mentioned witness," if it was really the case, that Miss —— had put the girl's eye out, "he said *it* "*was too true.*" Where then is the falsification here? That the eye was put out intentionally, he had not affirmed. The poor girl herself was afterwards brought forward; and being still the slave of the same mistress, her story, of course, was mitigatory enough. She not only ascribed the blow on the eye from the cat of six tails, with which her mistress was whipping her, to accident, but said that, though a film in consequence grew oyer it, after that she

used to see out of it, till an accidental blow with a button from another child finished the blindness. But she did not allege that any such explanation had been given to Mr Smith, or deny that she told him simply, she had lost her eye by a blow with a whip from her mistress.

The other case which formed by far the most revolting part of the letter in question, and the examination by the committee of assembly concerning it, as contained in the circular to the clergy, are worth extracting.

Mr Smith's statement was this:—

"It was only the day before yesterday, when writing, I heard the noise "of that dreadful instrument which so often grates on my ear, proceed from "a back yard; each crack of it being followed by an agonizing groan that "would have touched a heart of adamant. In hopes of begging off the mi- "serable creature, whoever it might be, I went there: but, gracious God! "what an appalling sight did I behold! a wretched woman extended on "the ground, with her clothes tied up to her waist — a powerful negro man, "upwards of six feet high (a driver from the work-house, who has to deal "there with the worst characters) lacerating her flesh; and this disgusting "and abominable sight directed and superintended by a mother and her "daughter; the poor miserable slave herself the mother of eleven children, "nine of whom are living. On going over to see my friend (I understand "this to mean his wife) some time after the wretched creature had been "flogged, she told me she had been very unhappy since I left her, as she "was sure she heard the noise of a whip inflicted on some wretched being. "It was painful to me to confirm her fears, by telling her I was an eye-wit- "ness of it. She desired her own servant to try to find out what had been "the poor woman's crime; and what think you it was? The poor wretch "had left some things before the fire to dry, belonging to her mistress, and "having placed them too near the fire, they were burnt, the whole of which "was not worth five shillings.

"It having come to the ears of this monster in the shape of a woman, "that my friend knew of her flogging her slave, she had the effrontery and "bare-faced impertinence, the next morning, when we were at breakfast, to "send us a present of some grapes, in the hope of appeasing us. I need "hardly say, that they were returned with a proper reply.

"The evening before last (he subjoins) we walked up to the ——— "(explained to mean the collector's house) our only society, to drink tea, "and I happened to mention to him what I had witnessed that day, as he "was now down at his office. I asked him if I could not take the woman "before a magistrate. There was a lady present (hardly deserving the epi- "thet), and a namesake, the wife of an attorney, and possessing one hundred "and fifty slaves, who, hearing me state the circumstance, and ask the ques- "tion, in the most unfeeling and brutal manner, said, 'What, Mr. ———, "*'would you prevent the woman doing what she pleased with her own?'* This "horrid woman so incensed me, that the only reply I could make was, and "not in the most courteous manner, for which I have since heard she has "designated me mighty rude, that 'I thanked God, for the sake of the poor "'slaves, that we are all travelling to that place where but two characters will "'be met, the good and the bad, the believer and the unbeliever.' I need "not add, that this silenced her. But think you what was the worthy

"his master's advice? He said I might have the woman brought before a "magistrate; but perhaps I might find him committing the same act by one "of his own slaves, and, therefore, not likely to give much redress."

This case was not referred, like the other, to a council of protection, nor was any evidence taken by the committee concerning it, besides the examination of the collector, which was in the following words.

After reading to him the above statement, the query was—"State whether "you means by 'we walked up to the ——' and what truth there is in the "whole statement." Answer, "The blank is evidently meant to be filled "up by the collector's (meaning my) house;' but with regard to what is al- "leged to have taken place there, *I cannot, at this distance of time, particu- "larly remember*: however, I remember Mr. Smith complaining that a wo- "man had been severely flogged in the yard opposite to the tavern where he "then lodged; and I also remember that I told him we could and would "bring the case before the magistrates, if he, from his own knowledge, had "seen enough of the excess of punishment, either as to the severity or the "number of the lashes inflicted: but after much conversation on the sub- "ject, I was impressed with the idea that he knew nothing more of the mat- "ter, than the mere hearing of the woman's cries could inform him; and, "therefore, I was decidedly of opinion, that it would be most ridiculous to "go before a magistrate, and when there, be found to have no sufficient "ground of information to go upon. This is my *general recollection* of the "matter, and it is to this specific punishment, Mr. Smith refers in telling "the story of the grapes."

I submit to the consideration of every discerning reader, whether there is here any contradiction in substance of Mr. Smith's statement, and whether it is not, on the contrary, confirmed, as far as the facts were witnessed by him, or from the nature of the case, could be within his knowledge.

It is admitted that Mr. Smith wished to carry the case before the magis- trates, the same day on which it occurred, for public investigation. He was willing, consequently, to attest what he said upon oath. It is not alleged, or insinuated, that his then account differed at all from that in his letter. The answer the collector gave, reflecting on the magistrates, is not expressly admitted indeed by him; but *neither is it denied*; and the committee, very observably, did not put any question to him to elicit that important fact. They thought it more prudent to be content with the question, "Would "the *magistrates you know* permit any man with impunity to violate the pro- "visions of the slave law, on complaint being made to them," to which, of course, a witness, who had previously been prudent enough to redeem himself by a general defence of their system, answered, "I believe not." It is unquestionable, from the general spirit and self-exculpatory object of his testimony, that, could he have contradicted Mr. Smith as to his own general imputation on the magistracy, he would gladly have done so; nor less so, that he would have been led to it by the committee.

The conversation, which in spite of his *failure of memory* he did state, may possibly have taken place very consistently with the further dissuasion stated; for Mr. Smith had not said, nor is it probably to be inferred from his statement, that he staid long enough in sight of the flogging to count

more than thirty-nine lashes; without which, however cruel the punishment, there would have been no violation of the slave law.

Had not the substantial fact, the cruel flagellation, been true, the committee certainly would not have left the evidence here. They would have called the accused party, and her whole household, and the people of the tavern opposite to which the punishment took place, to redeem the credit of the island from a charge which they justly regarded, as by far the most impressive of anything the letter contained, on the minds of the British people. I conclude, therefore, with confidence, that in respect of neither of the two specified cases is the truth of Mr. Smith's account so impeached, as at all to impair his credit.

But there is another document set forth in the circular, in which he does not stand equally cleared of imputation; though the terrible predicament he stood in must palliate his fault, namely, the examination of Mr. Smith himself.

It is very observable, that though the collector was examined on the 17th of December, Mr. Smith was not called before the committee till February the 9th; nor was there any intermediate proceeding before them to account for the delay. Was it because he was known to be still as firm in respect of the general state and treatment of slaves, as when he attended the Westmoreland meeting? Or had private negociations gone on to shake his resolution by the dread of official representations from the Assembly, if he stood out against the general character of the country, and the assurance of impunity in that respect, if *amende honorable* were made to the offended honour of Jamaica? Certain it is that no such measure is recommended in the report, nor have I heard of any such complaint as had been previously threatened to the Board of Trade, both by speeches at the Westmoreland meeting and newspaper invectives.

So it was, however, that after a long unexplained stay of proceedings, the unfortunate comptroller was called in, and being asked whether *he desired* to be examined, replied in the affirmative; and made his recantation, in terms, of every word of which Jamaica shall here have the benefit.

Q. Have you read the examinations of Mr. Evelyn?

A. I have.

Q. What means of information had you when you wrote the letter stated in that examination, relative to the character and conduct of the white inhabitants of this island, towards their slaves on plantations, either their own property, or that of persons in England; whom such inhabitants represented as their attorneys or agents?

A. Little or none, but that which I obtained from another; I was only a short time in the country at the period I wrote the letter referred to, as published in the Morning Chronicle; and my opinion was formed from the statements of another. I feel it an act of justice to acknowledge that I was deceived. I viewed the character and actions of the white inhabitants of Westmoreland with a jaundiced eye, being prejudiced against them by one whom I did not conceive could have misled me, as he certainly has done. *Since I have acquired the means of forming my own judgment, I am satisfied that the charges made against the managers of plantations, in perpetrating or suffering cruelty, are groundless.* In regard to that part of Mr.

Evelyn's examination, which refers to Bath estate, I must observe, that I was only once on that property; and I did not suppose the second estate which I visited was the same I had first been on. Had not my mind been warped against the parishioners of Westmoreland, I would not have written the letter before referred to; and since I found my error, I have written to correct it. I never intended the letter which was inserted in the Morning Chronicle for publication; but as innocent individuals have been injured by my act, I feel it due to them to make the only atonement in my power, by acknowledging my error in adopting the statement of another as facts, without waiting the result of my own experience.

Q. Have you any objection to state who your informant was, by whom you say you were misled?

A. I object to state his name, as I conceive I would, by doing so, be violating private confidence; nor do I think that the reflection, that the rule has been violated towards me, would justify me in retaliating. I am not induced to make this acknowledgment, from the circumstance of my letter being published, but merely as an act of justice to a community I have injured; and I stated, long previous to the production of my letter, to Mr. Thomas R. Hilton, and others, that I had been deceived and misled. The same acknowledgement was made in my subsequent letters to my relations, to whom my previous letter had been addressed.

I give the planters of Jamaica joy of this honorable victory; of this most unsuspicious and satisfactory justification! Well was it worth a thousand or two thousand pounds of their money, to secure its circulation through every parish in England.

None of our pious clergymen, of course, can be so uncandid or uncharitable as to doubt that the recantation was spontaneous and sincere. They might as well doubt whether Cranmer's was so when he retracted his protestant errors at Oxford.

By the way, his case suggests to me, and perhaps suggested to the Jamaica Assembly, the wisdom of not trying to bring their penitent to the stake at the Board of Trade. If dismissed, who knows whether he might not have relapsed into his pestilent errors, and given them a wider range in this country? Nay, perhaps he might not have submitted to ruin for the sake of his new faith, and his contrition might not have stood the test of a parliamentary investigation. It was certainly better to save the West India Committee any trouble in the matter, either at the Treasury, or in the House of Commons.

But let us take a nearer view of this happy conversion. Does he confess wilful falsehood in any of his former statements? Quite the reverse. He confesses *error* only, through prejudice and false information from some unnamed individual. It is not now the *hoary-headed calumniator*, as the orators of the Assembly are fond of calling me, that he was misled by: my name is wholly dropped. But a nameless person, resident on the spot, it seems, had the superlative confidence to give him accounts of the general case which were totally false, and which he must have soon discovered to be so. He was come to reside there for life, and his first rides out of the town might have shewn him that all was calumnious invention; as far, at least, as respected the whips and the drivers. The

anonymous informant must, to be sure, have been a very bold and shameless man; and was singularly fortunate in the tender, compassionate forbearance of one whom he had so cruelly betrayed.

But intentional misstatements, I repeat, is in no degree admitted by Mr. Smith. He wrote from honest error and credulity alone, if we believe him.

If this last statement then was true, so were all such parts of the former ones as rested on his own personal observation. Neither my book, nor his nameless informant, could have subomed his own senses to deceive him. He *did* therefore see that inhuman punishment of a wretched woman which chiefly excited, when published in the Morning Chronicle, horror in the English people, and indignation among the white people of Jamaica;—and he *did* hear a lady, the wife of an attorney, possessing one hundred and fifty slaves, say, on hearing his description of that horrid spectacle, and proposing to bring the case before Magistrates, "*What, Mr. Smith, would you prevent the woman doing what she pleased with her own!*" And let it be well observed, that the Committee was as abstinent here, as before in the examination of the collector. They did not venture to put a question to him as to those most important parts of the whole pretended calumny.

As to all the imputations on the general treatment of plantation slaves, the mode of conviction by which Mr. Smith was suddenly enabled so fully and positively to retract them, and attest the innocence of all the Jamaica managers, is mysterious enough. "*Since I have acquired the means of forming my own judgment, I am satisfied that the charges made against the managers of plantations in perpetrating or suffering cruelty, are grossly less.*"

What were these means? and when were they acquired? He had adopted those charges as the result of conviction, in a mind previously under opposite impressions, soon after he had, by settling at Savannah le Mar, been brought into close contact with the agricultural system, and delivered from those studied delusions and insidious blandishments by which new comers, strangers to slavery, are so commonly misled as to its true general character, while they see only what their hospitable entertainers choose to shew them, in the capital towns. How most egregiously were my dear friend (his wife) and myself "deceived by what we witnessed at Kingston. "For what we saw there, I now find, could give us no more idea of "slavery, than a man born blind can have an idea of the various colours "of the rainbow. Here we have it in its true colours, but my heart "sickens at the very thought of it."

Such is the introduction in the letter to his brother of the accounts in question; and we may fairly infer from it, that no previous correspondence from Kingston, this "*emissary of the Anti-Slavery Society*" had written to his brother as favourably of slavery as the planters could wish; but he had the candour, on the 15th May, soon after his arrival at Savannah le Mar, to retract his hasty errors.

He adhered to his new views, as has been shewn, even under the first and second tortures, to which private and public hostility subjected him. Up to the 17th December, though he shrunk in some degree from the

inculpation of individuals whom he had exposed to public resentment by his indiscretion, he did not shrink from what he had said against the community as to the mal-treatment of slaves! Yet he had long before heard both sides; for he said in the same unlucky letter, "I have a book "now lying beside me, 'Calumnies against the West Indies refuted,' "which is in general circulation through England, and in which I observe "in the page open before me, 'that punishing females with the whip is "'wholly abolished,' and further, 'that it is discontinued in the field,' "two as infamous falsehoods as were ever sent forth to the world; and "this is one of the ways people at home are deceived and misinformed."

How then was he reconverted to his first opinions, between the 17th of December and the 9th of February? What were the intermediate means of "*forming his own judgment?*" Abundance, no doubt, of such arguments as convinced poor Cranmer of his errors; but has the West India Committee so contemptuous an opinion of the intellects of our learned clergy, as to hope that they can suppose any other or fairer sources of conviction could be open to the poor comptroller under the circumstances he then stood in?

What access could *he*, a proscribed man, have to the plantations around him; or what means of fair information as to the discipline or practices in use there, while he was an object of universal suspicion and indignation, and under prosecution before the Assembly as a spy and a public enemy? Rash and desperate would have been the man, who, during that awful interval, should have dared to shew him any thing, or tell him any thing, discreditable to the planters; and yet we are gravely desired to believe that he was then converted by new means of forming an impartial judgment!! The Assembly, indeed, did wisely in sinking the fact of his having adhered to his general errors before the Westmoreland Meeting of December 17th; but not so wisely in giving us that part of the collector's examination, in which he says, speaking of his quondam very intimate friend, "He resides in the town of Saramnah le Mar, and, as far "as I know, has not been five miles from the town except twice." This was deposed December 17th; and yet by February 9th, notwithstanding the thraldom of intermediate persecution, he had acquired the means of forming his own judgment, and redeeming the characters of all the managers in Jamaica!!!

The concluding paragraph of this confession would be of some importance if true. If he had really stated to *Mr. Hylton* and others, long previous to the publication of his letter, that he had been deceived and misled as to *the general state of slavery, that*, being a voluntary confession before he was put on the rack, or placed in any danger, would have been worth a great deal more to the planters than the whole that has thus been served up to the clergy in England as a defence of slavery in general against his imputations. But why then did not the Committee call Mr. Hylton and those other persons, or some of them, to prove it? No reason can be supposed, but one. They knew the statement could not be supported, except in reference to those particular allusions or reflections on individuals that had already been retracted. Mr. Hylton had attended the Westmoreland Meeting of December 19th, as the friend and apologist of

Mr. Smith. He appears to have been the only gentleman who had the courage and humanity to attempt to soften the general indignation then raging against him. It was by his advice that Mr. Smith attended to offer his excuses, and Mr. Hylton addressed the meeting in his favor very anxiously. But not one word from him, or Mr. Smith himself, of the best excuse or mitigation, if true, this unconstrained retractation of his charges, this free admission of the errors and misinformation by which he had been misled, before his letter had been published. (See the reported speeches in a Jamaica Newspaper before cited, the Supplement to the Jamaica Royal Gazette of January 2nd, 1830.) Besides, this fear-born excuse is irreconcileable also with Mr. Smith's adherence in his letter to the Collector, written and published after the discovery, to what he said "against the system of slavery in general."

But I would be content to waive all this; and supposing Mr. Smith to have had fair means of correcting his errors, rest the question on the sincerity of this retractation. Which is the more probable, that he violated truth in his confidential letter to a brother, or in his public examination, surrounded by a host of enraged enemies, before the Assembly of Jamaica.

It is by no means for the value of Mr. Smith's testimony in his letter, that I have at such length defended its credibility and truth; for to what does it amount more than has been proved by a host of unimpeached and unimpeachable witnesses, and is attested by numerous cases proved before colonial tribunals, and officially certified to Parliament—the frequently cruel abuses of a master's power in the punishment of slaves, and the continuance of the driving system, which I have so abundantly proved in my seventh chapter from the mouths of the planters themselves? But such treatment of an unfortunate man, detected in telling tales out of school in a slave colony, and the use now made of this case by the colonial party, are both highly instructive; and the extraordinary appeal made upon it to the clergy of the realm, will, I trust, when thus repelled, guard them against other artifices to ensnare their opinions on these momentous subjects.

Another important object, and which more immediately led me to this exposition of the case, is the full answer it affords to the inference of Mr. Barclay, and other colonial opponents, that cases of cruelty in the colonies are rare, because the number of them we are able to establish before the British public, are not more numerous or more recent than those which I and my fellow-labourers in this cause have adduced. Let the terrible consequences to Mr. Smith of making disclosures, even in a confidential letter to a brother, of facts of that kind, be fairly considered; and it will be felt that the wonder is not how few, but how many, cases of cruelty have been brought to public notice in this country.

Various are the difficulties and the danger of bringing such crimes to light, even on the spot where they arise; not only from the exclusion of slave evidence, and the truly formidable consequences to a slave of complaining against his master, but from the peril of private resentment to every gentleman whose humanity prompts him to interpose or give publicity to abuses of the master's power, when they happen to fall within his knowledge. There is carcely any offence among gentlemen (and almost all who have white

faces are deemed such in the West Indies) that is more indignantly resented. A specimen of this occurred in the case stated in Appendix, No L to my first volume; and I could give other instances of it within my knowledge and experience. To mention one that was quite notorious in the Leeward Islands, Mr. Hodge, of Tortola, who was at length convicted and hanged for slave murder, was generally known for many years before to have barbarously tortured many of his slaves, and several of them had perished from the effects of his cruelty, as could have been sufficiently proved; but he was a determined duellist; and this sufficed to give him impunity. The gentleman who at last prosecuted him, and brought him to justice, was generally understood to have done so, because, being involved in a quarrel with him for another cause, he had no other way to avoid the risk of his pistols.

The great discouragement given to informants and prosecutors, even when the act of cruelty is punishable by the colonial laws, and enormous in its nature, is another and most powerfnl cause of the suppression of such crimes. Bills of indictment, though rarely, if ever, preferred but in strong and clear cases, are most commonly thrown out by the grand juries; and when they are found, fortunate indeed is that prosecutor who is able to obtain a conviction. Even when he does so, instead of applause for his generous and humane exertions, he becomes, except with the very few who share his feelings, an object of general dislike, as a man who makes it dangerous for slave masters to exercise freely their plantation and domestic authority; and who has ministered new means to the anti-slavery party in this country of bringing disgrace upon the system in which all are engaged; and if the offenders are punished in any degree, general sympathy with them tends to augment the popular hatred of the prosecutor.

Many cases officially attested, and printed by parliament, will amply justify these remarks. A great number of them have been copied from the parliamentary papers into that invaluable repository of information on these subjects, the Anti-Slavery Reporters; but as neither the one nor the other, I fear, are much read, except by those who are already convinced of the general truths here stated, I will extract another specimen or two of such colonial characteristics from papers printed by the House of Commons.

In doing this, I shall suppress the names of the persons by whom the cruelties were perpetrated, though given in the public documents I quote, as I did in the Appendix, No. I. to my former volume. My reason is, that when not necessary to the authentication of the case, the name of the offender can add nothing to the public good effect; and it is wrong to give useless pain, if not to the offending individuals themselves, at least to their innocent connections. Besides, I have always felt that it is rather hard upon persons guilty of such offences in the West Indies, to expose them personally if it can be avoided before the British people, a small part of whom only know how to make just allowances for the almost irresistible effects of early habit and prejudice, the long exercise of slave discipline, and the contagion of bad example and harsh popular feelings, in the society of a place peopled wholly with slave masters and slaves.

If a Chinese or a Turk resident here, or with near connections among us, were known to me to have committed infanticide, or a crime against nature, in his native land, I would not needlessly point him out by name as having been guilty of such offences.

CASE No. 2.—*Presentment of a Grand Jury in St. Christophers, extracted from a Paper printed by an order of the House of Commons of May 1st, 1827.*

"I have the honour," writes Governor Maxwell to Earl Bathurst, "to "inclose documents relative to the treatment of an old female slave aged "fifty-two, named Betto Douglass, the property of the Earl Romney, by Mr. "—, his Lordship's attorney. The brief state of the case is comprised in an "idea the old woman had formed, that the late Lord Romney had con- "sented to her being manumitted, which was in some degree confirmed "by Mr. Goldfrap, who, I have reason to suppose, advised her to petition "me on the subject. On receiving her statement, I referred it to Mr. "Goldfrap and Mr. C. The former assured me that he really believed "she ought to be freed; but Mr. C. positively denied any pretension to "freedom.

"As she could not support the allegation, I recommended her to return "to Lord Romney's estate, and on her doing so, Mr. C. put her into con- "finement and *in the stocks, in which situation she remained from about the "beginning of May to the 2nd of December*, on which day she was released "by the magistrates, whom I requested to investigate into a report that "had reached me of her being in confinement during the six months be- "fore stated. Some little time after, an investigation of Mr. C.'s treat- "ment of the woman took place in Basseterre, and after the examination "of some witnesses, the magistrates ordered her to return to the estate; but "sufficient evidence had come out to induce the attorney general to give "Mr C. notice, that he should indict him for illegal treatment at the en- "suing court of King's Bench and grand sessions of the peace; which was "accordingly done; *but the grand jury ignored the bill, and animadverted in "a very extraordinary manner on the prosecution.*"

"The several inclosures will inform your Lordship of the real circum- "stances of the case, which contain strong evidence of the illegal treat- "ment of the old woman; but this sort of confinement being a common "usage, it is from custom considered justifiable and proper; but this opi- "nion is strongly reprobated by the attorney general, and some humane "thinking gentlemen in the island."

Such is the compendious statement of the governor. Were I to insert the papers referred to by him, my readers would see that the case was still worse than they may apprehend from this summary account. The poor old woman unable, in point of law, to enforce the promise of her deceased owner, the late Lord Romney, and his direction to his attorney to grant her a manumission, though she proved by the admission of Mr. Goldfrap, one of those attornies, that such directions had been given, had accepted, as a boon next in value, the permission to work for her own benefit under

such employers as she might find, paying a monthly rent for that use of her own bodily faculties, clear of all charges for her maintenance, to the manager of her noble owner. The compact is of a kind very common in the West Indies between domestic slaves and their masters, and is usually called "*hiring a slave out to him or herself.*" But the rent exacted from Betto Douglass was, as she not incredibly alleged, too high. It was three dollars and a half per month; which in the currency of the Leeward Islands amounts to 7*s.* 2½*d.* per week, whereas the magistrates, evidently not too favourable to her, recommended its reduction to a weekly rent of 6*s.* 9*d.* She had declared to Mr. C. the manager, her inability to pay the three dollars and a half; and yet her getting in her friends made good the payments for first imprisonment, which produced her vernor; and this on its failure, to the terri fixed in the stocks of a plantation sick h *months*, with such brief suspensions only a gard to the health or life of the sufferer, u livered at last, from that cruel treatment, n but by the interposition of the governor. will deny that these facts, and especially the stocks, were clearly established, and sufficient for the conviction of the defen held, the act was criminal in law; still m ing a bill. Yet the grand jury, not conte sented to the court under their hands, th

"In returning this bill of indictment "*jury feel themselves called upon respectf* "*gret that a prosecution should have been* "*and supported only by the slender evid* "*the feelings of an honourable, humane, a* "*siderably wounded unnecessarily, and h* "*before us, appeared unimpeachable, atten*

"*The grand jury also beg leave to exp* "*dignation that this course of proceeding* "*the time and money of the country sho* "*vestigating such frivolous and unfounded* "*grounded upon.*"

"Such are the feelings of the most eminent and res pher, where I resided ab a fact that my opponents validate my opinions as the West Indies. From come within a few years to say that the popular fe the better, even if I did material improvements ar are, or rather until the stat

CASE No. 3.—*Conviction in the Bahama Islands for cruelty to a female slave called Kate, extracted from Papers printed by an order of the House of Commons of March 27, 1829.*

The poor victim of cruelty in this case, was a domestic slave of Mr.—, an eminent resident proprietor, who having incurred the resentment of that gentleman and his lady for not working so hard as they required, was thus treated by their immediate and repeated orders. "She was confined for the "period of seventeen days and nights in the stocks without intermission. "They gave her, while in that situation, tasks which she was unable to "perform, and caused her to be repeatedly flogged for the non-perform-"ance of such tasks. After releasing her from the stocks, they sent her "to labour in the fields before she had recovered from the effects of her "confinement, and caused her to be flogged in the fields, where the girl "died on the morning after she had received one of those floggings."

Thus far I copy only the summary account of the charge given by Mr. President Munnings, the then governor of the colony. He adds to it the still more odious cruelty of rubbing red pepper (capsicum) upon the eyes of the girl; which, and all the other particulars here mentioned, were clearly brought home to Mr. and Mrs. ——, by the evidence, and with circumstances of further aggravation.

The punishment of the stocks, independently of its long continuance, seems to have been unusually severe. "*The stocks were made,*" said one of the witnesses, "*so that a person confined in them cannot lie down and sit up "at pleasure.*" Yet "*she was kept in the stocks every night.*" No wonder that one distressing effect was *cramps*, or spasmodic contractions of the muscles of the legs, the severity and danger of which in hot climates, are well known to be very great.

The witnesses who saw her after her deliverance from the stocks, speak of this so as to shew that, even then, the spasms were matter of ocular observation. "*Kate was well before she was put in the stocks; she was cramped "when she was taken out.*" "*She did not, with the exception of her legs "being cramped, appear to be ill.*"

She was not left, however, while in the stocks, to the tortures only of an uneasy posture of seventeen days' continuance, and of its spasmodic effects. She was repeatedly flogged while fixed in them, and sometimes taken out only "*to be tied up to be flogged,*" i. e. suspended by the wrists, in order to receive the discipline more severely.

How often during the seventeen days she received these floggings or whippings does not distinctly appear. One of the witnesses, Mr. ——'s, overseer and god-son, and his instrument in some of these cruelties, said, "*he did not know that she was punished seven times, and that he thought it "was about six times,*" but an indifferent witness who was a visitor at the house on a Sunday, the day Kate was first put into the stocks, deposed that she heard Mr. and Mrs. ——, give orders for her punishment three times on that day, twice before, and once after dinner; and that she heard the poor girl's cries accordingly three several times that day; and understood that she had been flogged the day before also. She added that the

directions were given to Mr. S., Mr. ——'s nephew, another overseer on his estates, that on the third order being given, S. exclaimed, "*Good God uncle! what flog again? but Mr.* —— *insisted on his order being obeyed,*" and said, "if she does not do her work; she must be flogged."

Mr. D., the god-son and overseer, on his cross-examination sufficiently confirmed this account; for, speaking of the same Sunday, he says, "*She* "*was flogged by Mr. S. he does not know how often;* he was not there all "day;" and he afterwards speaks of six distinct floggings subsequent to that day, as does Mr. S. also, some of which they both admit were administered by themselves.

To the stocks and the whippings, the torture of red pepper applied to the eyes, was repeatedly added, and at the same time, by the orders of Mrs. ——, the mistress. Speaking of two of the floggings administered by the hands of another slave, Mr. D. says, "*pepper was rubbed in her eyes during* "*the punishment;*" and of another administered by himself, "*Witness* "*himself flogged Kate while she was in the stocks; he rubbed pepper in her* "*eyes at the time he flogged her, by the direction of Mrs.* ——."

He afterwards adds, "she had her tasks to perform on the same days "that she was peppered. She was flogged because she did not perform "them. Witness thinks she could not see to do either of the tasks after "her eyes were *peppered.*"

Mr. S. the nephew, admitted his knowledge of the pepper having been twice applied, and once at least by himself, for he said, "*he rubbed it in* "*her eyes to prevent her from sleeping.*" Such were the combined modes of punishment during seventeen days.

At the end of this dreadful term of suffering, the poor girl was let out of the stocks, but only to be sent to the field to work under the drivers; which to a domestic slave is justly regarded as a very severe punishment, and among the worst that a master can lawfully inflict. In her case, it must have been greatly aggravated by weakness and depression of spirits; and by those cramps in her legs under which it appears she was still suffering when turned into the field.

She was kept there, and of course compelled to endure the common labours of the gang, peculiarly distressing though, from their novelty as well as severity, they must have been to her, till the close of the fourth day, when she was too much exhausted and debilitated to walk from the field to the house; but was carried or supported in her way thither by the driver, and presented as an invalid to her master and mistress. But she was not received into her former abode. "Mrs. —— ordered her away to the "negro houses (the huts of the field-slaves, to whose condition she was "now reduced), saying she would not have her about the yard."

The mother of Mrs. —— being present, asked the poor girl what was the matter; and, finding her silent, repeated the question, and refused her some water which she had prayed for, till an answer should be given; on which Kate said, she had had a little fever the night before. Of course she durst not say, before her oppressors, that her debility was the effect of their own cruel treatment. The mother, on feeling her pulse, &c. said, "You "have no fever now," and told her if she was ill in the morning to come up for medicine. "Mr. and Mrs. —— said nothing, and Kate went, with-

"out assistance, to the negro houses." The rest of the tragical tale is thus briefly told by the same witness, D. the overseer. "When she arrived at "the negro houses, she was flogged by the under-driver, because she had "walked very well down to the negro houses, and had required assistance "coming up from the field; witness did not see her flogged that time, but "heard the lashes and her cries; he heard four or five, but does not know "whether there were more. Believes the driver did it of his own accord. "She did not come up next morning for medicine. *She went to the field "and died there.*"

It appears, from another part of the same testimony, that this last outrage on the tortured and sinking frame of poor Kate, would have been carried further, if the driver had not desisted at the intreaty of a man named John Wylly. The witness added that he did not know whether Wylly's "in-"terference was in consequence of the girl's debilitated state or not."

As to the provocation to the last whipping, it was, apparently, an erroneous suspicion of the poor girl's having feigned more weakness than she really felt, when carried or supported from the field; for the only assigned ground of it was, her having walked afterwards from the master's house to the negro huts. The latter was presumably a very short distance, for the huts are commonly not far from the homestall; and the direction to the girl to come, if ill in the morning, to the house for medicine, seems to shew that it was pretty near; whereas the field she came from was, by one witness, said to be a mile, and by none less than half a mile from the house. Besides, the draught of water, which had no doubt been given after her answer was obtained, and the cessation of labour, since the sinking on delirium in the field, were enough probably to refresh the poor exhausted creature, in a sufficient degree to restore her muscular powers for the purpose of walking to the huts.

As D. stated, on his belief, that this last flogging was the driver's spontaneous act, it may be said that, however unjust and cruel, it was not imputable to Mr. and Mrs. ——. But supposing the witness sincere in that belief, which, from his desire to favour them, as manifested in many parts of his testimony, may well be doubted, and that the under-driver really acted of his own accord, it would only more clearly establish what Mr. Huskisson justly called "not the least deplorable feature in the case: that "besides the floggings which the girl received by order of her owners, and "at the hands of the owners, other individuals were free to maltreat her at "their pleasure."

In what degree the last punishment, on the evening before her death, contributed to the fatal event, cannot be known; for even the measure of the infliction was not ascertained by the overseer. He heard the lashes and the cries, and so presumably did his employer, but took no concern with the extent to which the torturous punishment was carried by the sub-driver's discretion, though a man named Wylly, (a stranger on the estate, as may be inferred,) had at last the humanity to interfere and intreat the driver to desist. "It was the night before Kate's death," said D. "that John "Wylly interfered to save her."

These ought to have been alarming circumstances when it was announced to Mr. —— the next day at noon, that the poor victim had died in the

field. It would have been natural to investigate anxiously the degree and effects of a punishment so speedily followed by death, more especially if the driver had really inflicted it without orders; unless Mr. and Mrs. —— had felt that the precedent severities and cruelties long practised by themselves, or under their express command, would be justly regarded as having led to the fatal event. In that case, certainly, it was their natural and prudent course to ask no questions, and to preclude rather than court investigation by others.

Accordingly, no investigation of the under-driver's conduct is alleged to have taken place; no coroner's inquest was held or invited; no surgeon called in to examine the corpse; no notice given to any magistrate or other person, though Mr. Forbes, a justice of peace, lived within a mile of the estate; but the body of poor Kate was hurried to the grave with the utmost posible celerity, unseen, in all probability, by any eyes but those of persons who, if the case was murder, were actors or accomplices in the crime. As she died in the field at noon, and was buried on the same day at evening, there was hardly time enough, in that climate, for the corpse to stiffen or grow cold; and, presumably, not a moment more than was necessary to dig the grave and otherwise prepare for the interment. The master, it appears, interfered with his directions, as to where the body, during that brief interval, should be kept; a very unusual interposition by a planter; for the invariable custom, or one which I never heard of an exception to before, is to leave the care of the body of the deceased slaves, and all other preparations for their burial, to the discretion or choice of surviving relations or friends. But though we find incidentally that Kate had a father on the estate, Mr. ——, on hearing of her death, gave orders that her body should be carried to, and laid out in, a particular place; and that place was the house of the driver; the very person probably, who, next to Mr. and Mrs. ——, had an interest in preventing any discovery that might be made by inspection of the corpse; and a person, too, into whose house the slaves were not likely, from feelings of curiosity, to intrude.

D. the overseer, indeed, stated the orders to have been, to bring up the corpse, and place it in the room where Kate had slept; which, as she was a domestic, must have been in or near the master's house; but if the witness was correct in that point, the order must have been countermanded, for S. the other overseer, and nephew of Mr. M., expressly says, "the corpse was laid out in the driver's house." It is true, this witness adds, "the door was open; anybody might have gone in;" and D. also said, "he did not know that Mr. M. gave any orders to prevent her being seen." This is probable enough; for if such orders had been necessary to instruct the driver, as to the master's object in sending the corpse to his house, they would, of course, not have been given in the hearing of one who could prove them, which a driver, being always a slave, could not. If the door was open, it was probably because the driver felt himself sufficiently secure against intruders, without the discomfort of shutting out the air.

But that the corpse was, in fact, seen, when stripped and laid out, by any of the other slaves, or by any person whatever, is not alleged by either of these witnesses, either on their knowledge or belief; though they were both sufficiently disposed to state every thing, not untrue, that might favour the de-

fendants. It was, upon cross-examination on their part, that the last-cited answers were given, and it not being added whether the body was, or was not seen, we may reasonably infer, that no question to elicit that information, was thought prudent by the counsel for the defence.

Now, if the corpse was not seen by any of the slaves on the estate, those who know the characteristic curiosity of negroes, and how great an interest they take in the obsequies of their departed friends and companions, will find no difficulty in concluding, that it was because they were not permitted to see it. The mode of keeping the corpse, and the rapidity of its interment, precluded their having a view of it, though intended probably to prevent inspection, not by them only, but other and more dangerous eyes.

Nevertheless, it was discovered, or suspected, on the estate, that poor Kate had been brought to her end by violent means; for it may be collected from the papers, that the information or summons, which led to enquiries by a magistrate, and afterwards to a prosecution by the attorney-general, came first from one of the slaves, named Boatswain.

What his information was does not appear; for being a slave, he could not be produced as a witness, and the defendants, while, in their petition hereinafter-mentioned, they ascribe the prosecution to his "*infamous report*," and "*nefarious falsehood*," prudently avoid to explain what his statements actually were; except generally, "*that the woman had perished under the punishment inflicted on her.*" It may clearly be inferred, however, that Boatswain must have founded that proposition, not merely on the facts hereinstated, as given in evidence first before a magistrate, and afterwards on the trial by Mr. ———'s two overseers, the one his nephew, and the other his godson, for to these witnesses the petitioners make no objection, nor dispute any fact they deposed. On the contrary, they were continued, as appears, in their places on the estate. The "*infamous report*," and "*nefarious falsehood*," therefore, must have gone beyond their testimony; though this was ample enough, as every mind unwarped by colonial feelings and manners will admit, to have well warranted a conviction not only for cruelty, but murder.

So thought the attorney-general of the colony; and so he continued to think to the last; for the petitioners themselves tell us, that *in his concluding address to the court and jury on the trial, he emphatically acknowledged himself still impressed with a conviction of the fact, that the woman had been murdered.*

But what was the reception of this shocking case by the public of a West India colony, and the dispensers of justice there? The grand jury threw out the bill of indictment for murder; certainly not from want of evidence of the facts here stated, or disbelief of that evidence; for it was on the same facts, and the same testimony, that they found a bill for a misdemeanour. They thought, therefore, that in a case where a life had been lost in a manner so revolting to European feelings, it was too much to submit to a court and jury, whether the criminal parties were guilty of murder, or even manslaughter.

The defendants, being convicted, by decisive and undisputed evidence, on the minor charge which they were tried upon, next experienced very lenient treatment from the bench; for great lenity it surely was, to punish

them only with five months' imprisonment and a fine of 300*l.* currency, (about half that amount in sterling money) for an offence of such complicated, odious, and long-continued cruelty; and so very probably amounting to murder, not only in conscience, but in law. The only doubt in that respect must have been founded on the want of positive proof that the death was the effect of the cruel punishments which the young woman had sustained for seventeen preceding days, and up to within a few hours of the fatal event; but the circumstances furnish a very strong and irresistible presumption that such was the case, and the absence of more direct evidence ought not to have availed the party, by whose own most suspicious conduct, in the hasty interment of the body unseen by any competent witness, such evidence was precluded.

How would such a case, and such treatment of it in a court of justice, have been regarded in this country? The criminals would have found their prison a necessary assylum from public indignation; and, when released from it, would, like the wretch *Hare* and his wife, have been glad, by changing their names, and abandoning the place they were known in, to escape from the odium and infamy and popular vengeance that pursued them. Had they even been capitally convicted and executed, indignation at their crime would have overpowered every feeling of pity for their fate. Like the late wretched Mrs. Hibner, the last sound they heard when turned from the scaffold, and struggling in the pangs of death, would have been the exultations of the crowd at their punishment; and execrations on their guilty heads.

Widely different are the feelings of the populace in the West Indies, and not of the vulgar only, but of those colonists that stand highest in local rank and respectability, when the perpetrators of murderous oppression are white persons, and the subjects of it are negro slaves. It is for the sake of this important and instructive distinction that I would solicit particular attention to the case of Mr. and Mrs. ——: for it produced, in the minds of their white compeers of the Bahamas, compassion and favor only for the criminals, instead of indignation at their crime. The rejection of the bill for murder was so far from exciting censure, that their having been charged with that crime was regarded as a grievance; and the sentence of five months' imprisonment as a great severity, demanding the merciful interposition of the crown. The most powerful and general solicitations were immediately made in their favour to President Mu
that most inadequate punishment; to which he hon
would not extend mercy to those by whom none had
the Governor, whose place Mr. Munnings tem
soon after returned to the colony, a petition for th
sented to him, backed by an address with earnes
pardon, from no less than twenty-eight gentlem
describes as "some of the most respectable inh
comprising the foreman and others of the jury, a
Colonial Assembly.

Still stronger evidence, if possible, of the distorted colonial feelings on such subjects may be found in the conduct of the governor, which a desire of popularity among his subjects can alone explain; for though he thought

it too strong a measure to grant that pardon which his predecessor had refused, he wrote to Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State, inclosing the petition and address, expressing his regret at the sentence, his opinion that persons of such respectability should have been spared from imprisonment, and his anxious desire to have his Lordship's approbation for remitting the fine; the only part of the punishment that his mediation could apply to, since the term of imprisonment had nearly expired, and would end long before an answer could be received.

And what were the grounds assigned for all this favour to so truly odious and shocking a case? No provocation had been given by the poor victim beyond the nonperformance of the tasks imposed on her. No doubt was pretended of the truth of the charge on which the conviction was founded. No suggestion that the evidence was false or inaccurate, as to any part of the cruelties imputed. The petitioners themselves did not deny the truth of any one fact given in evidence against them. It would, indeed, have been hopeless to do so; since their own dependents and relations, the overseers, were the principal witnesses, and had not even been dismissed from their service, after giving evidence of their guilt before a magistrate and the grand jury; but appear to have remained in their places on the estate even at the time of the trial. Besides, the jurymen who signed the address of course did not mean to impeach their own verdict; nor did the governor, in his pleadings to the secretary of state on behalf of the prisoners, intimate the slightest doubt as to the reality of the cruel acts of which they had been convicted.

What, then, were the defensive or extenuatory arguments for mercy? They are curious; and to European minds instructive. "They (Mr. and Mrs. ——) have ever been deemed respectable people." Aye, and they were deemed so still, notwithstanding their unimpeached conviction of barbarities towards a helpless woman, from the description of which our hearts recoil with horror: for, adds the governor, "*Notwithstanding their "being in gaol, they are visited by the most respectable persons in the place, "and by all who knew them before.*" Aye, and we have learned since, from newspaper accounts, that a public dinner was given to them after their discharge, which the governor himself attended.

As to their general character, it seems to have been liable to one abatement, which, though, perhaps, to colonial feelings, it rather added to the unpopularity of the conviction, will here, when taken in connection with the provocation alleged, be thought to aggravate the crime. "They have "ever been deemed," says the governor, "respectable people, *and although "I am willing to believe, and ever did believe, that Mr. —— scrupulously "exacted a fair proportion of work from all his people, yet in other respects, "I looked upon him as indulgent and attentive to their comforts.*" The choice of expressions here is curious. It would appear to English eyes, that the exacting "*a fair proportion of work*," need not have been regarded as any exception to the favourable judgment; but colonial readers will clearly apprehend that more is meant than meets the ear, in this qualification of a very zealous apology, and that Mr. —— was addicted, in a more than ordinary degree, to that grand oppression of West Indian slavery, the pushing forced labour to excess. One of their own witnesses, when examined as to

the exacting work from slaves while in the stocks, with a view apparently to find some excuse for the defendants in the praetice of others, could furnish no such extenuation. "She did not know whether it was the "custom to give negroes work to perform when they were in the stocks;" and another said, "that he himself never gave his negroes any work to do while in the stocks; not even light work." Yet it was proved and uncontradicted fact, that poor Kate, while undergoing that torturous species of confinement during seventeen days and nights, was commanded to perform, and flogged for not performing, the full ordinary quantum of daily work, and more than it was possible for her to accomplish. "When she was "in the stocks," said the overseer D. "she had a task of twelve fathom "of basket plait to perform per day. Twelve fathom is the usual task "Some can do more—Kate was not accustomed to plaiting—a person "not accustomed to plaiting could not plait twelve fathom—she had her "task to perform on the same day on which her eyes were peppered. She "was flogged because she did not perform them. Witness thinks she "could not see to do either of the tasks after her eyes were peppered." It may be collected also, that severity in labour was, as usual, accompanied with severity in discipline, by these "*respectable persons.*" The general reputation of Mr. and Mrs. ——(said Captain Pinder) is, that they are *strict in discipline*, and another witness called to their characters could not, in his cross examination, deny that he himself once complained to the attorney-general of Mr. ——, barbarity, and called him a *Turk*.

There is, in this case, a concurrence of almost every circumstance that can enhance the force of my general remarks. The offenders were not low and indigent persons, who might be presumed to be an unfair specimen of the society in which they moved; or mercenary agents of an absent proprietor, abusing, contrary to his humane instructions, their delegated power; but persons, as is expressly stated by all their mediators, of the first respectability; and resident proprietors, to whom the victim of their cruelty belonged. One of them also, an immediate actor in, and full accomplice of the crime, was of that sex in which the vice of inhumanity is pre-eminently unnatural and odious. It might, therefore, have been expected that the ladies, at least, if not the gentlemen of the Bahamas, would have turned their backs on such offenders. Instead of this, we are told that "*they "were visited in gaol by the most respectable persons in the place, and by all "who knew them before.*" I fear we must understand then that their female friends and acquaintances were of the number.

After such examples, all recent ones, of the state of popular feeling, and the effect of public prosecutions in the colonies, it can hardly be necessary to offer any further proofs, that very numerous cruelties, even of a kind punishable by law, may be perpetrated every year, in every colony, without any public investigation or notice. As to those, often not less cruel abuses of a master's power of punishing, which no law affects to controul, however numerous though they are, they can never, of course, be established by legal evidence, as they can be the subjects of no legal proceeding, and consequently, whatever local publicity they may occasionally obtain where they arise, they can never be proved in this country; so as to make it safe to publish them here.

'In very many instances, the humane and indignant feelings of persons resident in the colonies, have prompted them to send accounts to the African Institution, or Antislavery Society, and to individuals in this country, of more than ordinary cruelties that have come to their knowledge, and with such circumstantiality and verisimilitude, as, independently of the confidence due to the writers, inspired rational belief; and sometimes without any expresss injunction of secrecy; and yet, from the great danger of disastrous consequences to the writers, such as Mr. Smith of Jamaica recently experienced, as well as legal danger to the publishers here, no public use has been made of them. The exceptions have, almost exclusively, been when the cases had been the subjects of legal prosecutions, though for the most part abortive, in the colonies; because then a parliamentary motion for papers could bring them before the public, without danger either to the publishers or informants.

'Not a few times have such communications been made to myself, as would have impressed the public here, much more strongly than the letter of Mr. Smith, and sometimes, with evidence carrying full conviction to my own mind; and yet, from my full knowledge of the peril to which my informants would be exposed if discovered or suspected, I have uniformly abstained from giving their statements to the public, or even to the committees of the African Institution and Antislavery Society, bodies of which I have always been a member. If Mr. Smith's letter had come to *me*, instead of his brother, it would, most probably, never have been heard of; because I should have foreseen that if the account was true, his specific statements and allusions, notwithstanding the blanks, would inevitably betray the author; and yet, if stripped of those particularities, the effect would have been lost. Indeed from his use of my book, I should have supposed, as I did in fact suspect when I read it in the Morning Chronicle, that it was "a device of the enemy." Such snares have more than once been laid for me.

But as these professions of my rule of conduct may be doubted, they shall not be left unsupported by facts that I am able to prove.

I hope that Sir Robert Peel will excuse a liberty I am about to take with his much respected name, without his consent or knowledge. If I were to act towards *him* in any degree disrespectfully, it would be doing much violence to the feelings I entertain for his character, in all its points; but his consent to refer to him in this work for any purpose, might, perhaps, lead to the suspicion of his having approved its general objects. I will not, therefore, ask for it.

When he was under secretary of state in the colonial department, I had sometimes the honour of conversing with him on some official affairs; for the West India gentlemen had not, at that time, protested against all approaches of me or mine to the colonial office, as a high crime and misdemeanour; and his manliness would, I doubt not, have despised any such illiberal interdict.

It was from that gentleman that I first heard of the conviction of Mr. Hodge; and when he expressed his horror at the atrocious crimes that had been proved on the trial, I surprised him, perhaps, by saying that I had, for years past, been well acquainted with that gentleman's cruelties; and had

positive proof of them in my possession. To make good my assertion, I sent him a large parcel of written orders from Mr. Hodge, all in his own handwriting, addressed to his blacksmith, directing him to prepare iron neck collars with projecting hooks, heavy chains, puddings for the legs, and other instruments for the torturous punishment of his slaves. These had been given to me some years before, by a lawyer of the island, into whose hands they had been put by the blacksmith, to sustain an action that he had been obliged to bring against Mr. H. for the amount of his bill; but had made no use of them, public or private; because my possession of them, if known at Tortola, would have been certainly ascribed to the gentleman from whom I received them, and might have produced to him disastrous consequences.

I regretted the impediment greatly; because, if such evidence had been laid before Lord Liverpool, I doubted not Mr. Hodge would have been dismissed from his seat in the council of that colony, and his office as a magistrate; and for another reason that weighed with me still more powerfully. The use of such instruments had long before been prohibited by the Meliorating Act in force in that colony; and the general open contempt of the provisions of that law, was a fact I was very desirous to establish, against the positive assertions of the assemblies, that they were duly observed and practised. Now it would have been a most striking proof of this fact, that not only had a gentleman in Mr. Hodge's situation unscrupulously given under his hand, a great number of orders for making such instruments, and of the worst kind; but that actions were thought maintainable in the chief court of the island on such unlawful contracts. The gentleman I received them from, was actually surprised when I pointed out the illegality, so completely had the meliorating act been overlooked, or regarded as a nullity, by practitioners on the spot; and had not Mr. H. settled the matter by paying the debt, no such objection probably would have prevented its recovery by judgment.

Some singular coincidences have put it in my power now to make public, without danger to any individual, another instance, in which I have suppressed, for several years, information on these subjects of no ordinary importance, and which might alone suffice to satisfy every impartial mind, that cruelties, in the government of plantation slaves, are as abundant as ever; or at least that their impunity, and non-publication in greater numbers in this country, furnishes not the slightest presumption to the contrary.

It will, at the same time, furnish a graphic illustration of the general system, more impressive, perhaps, than any general account of it, or any particular examples that have been hitherto submitted to the British public. I will, therefore, though at no small additional expence of the reader's patience, give it at full length, and request for it particular attention.

Case No. 4.—*Account of the Treatment of the Slaves on two united Estates, called Fahie's and Orton's, in the Island of St. Christopher, and the fatal effects that followed.*

Mr. Wells, the owner of the beautiful estate
tor of several plantations in the Island of St.
1812, he granted a lease of two of them, called
the term of 14 years, to a Mr. C———, a
former survived; and who, about the year 1816, be
had before been the sole manager, of those estat
and were demised together with their gangs of
negroes, whereof 59 had belonged to Fahie's, a
estates were considered as more than commonly
ages of the slaves were well proportioned fo
bers; for there were 41 men, 47 women, 10
males, and 16 infant females.

These poor human subjects of the demise, did not long escape the ordinary consequences of such a transfer.* Their numbers soon began to decrease, and continued to do so in a truly frightful progress, the amount of which I am able to ascertain from 1815 to 1819, both inclusive, by an original document now before me, in the handwriting of Mr. C——— himself, containing an account of his annual returns for parochial purposes.

In April 1815, the number remaining of th
was 108, shewing a loss, in three years, of no
1816, they were reduced to 102; in April 181
to 91; in 1819, to 86; shewing a loss altogeth
lives out of 140, or above 39 per cent. To thi
ber equal to all the intermediate births; of w
Having regard to the number and ages of the
not well suppose, unless from extreme severity
births in seven years; which would raise the los

Nor is this all; for the lessees were bound
keep up, and leave at the end of the term, the o
of the slaves; and though this covenant was n
that a considerable number of slaves had been
and placed on these estates, to recruit their decl
of these is not specified; but I find it stated by that gentleman's manager, in September 1815, that he had placed on the estate negroes and stock to the amount of 3100*l.*

The deathful progress went on from 1819, by what annual or proportion does not appear, until 1824; or at least till the death of Mr. C———r

* See my first vol. p. 86-7.

in the preceding year, when an execution, for arrears of rent, obtained by Mr. Wells against him in his life-time, was levied on his interests in the consolidated estates and slaves, and on his goods and effects on the estate. An inventory of all the slaves was consequently taken on the 10th of April, 1824, and they were found to amount to 60 only of the two original gangs; comprising all such as had been born since the commencement of the lease, and were still surviving; shewing a further loss since 1819, of 26, over and above all that had been born, or purchased, and died from that period. There were found also 17 slaves of those purchased by Mr. C————, being the remains of 20, which he had put on the estate during the latter part of the tenancy; or of them and their subsequent issue.

During a period of less than 12 years, therefore, there had been a loss of 80 out of 140 human beings, chiefly, when they were demised, in the prime of life; besides all the unknown, but unquestionably large, further amount of their intermediate issue; and of all the purchased recruits, except seventeen.

These facts must be sufficiently startling, even to those v
some measure, the ordinary waste of life, by which we are s
West India sugar; but I am enabled, by singular means, to e
truth, to the conviction of the most incredulous; and at the
account for them from causes, by no means extraordinary e
degree, though too little known and regarded on this sid
lantic.

Among the books of the deceased, found in an open c
was the document to which I have referred; being a ki
tation day-book, kept partly by Mr. C———— himse
manager, or overseer, who presided over the estate du
sence from the island;* and as it was of no value to b
claimed by any representative of the deceased, it cam
the hands of a professional gentleman, who acted as on
tornies at the sale. It was from this gentleman that
will deposit it with my booksellers for the inspectio
gentleman, giving his name, who may wish to satisfy hi
ine, and that my extracts from it are correct. The do
remote part of the world, and has finally quitted the W
not, for his sake, make this use of his present; but
lost the benefit of it, as of other information, illustrati
of slavery, that has, at different periods, fallen into my
The only alteration I have made in it, is to mark its p
the purposes of reference.

* I withhold the name of this person, as I have done that of the lessee, though the latter is dead, for a reason before intimated, viz. because I hold it wrong to expose either the living, or the memory of the dead, to a disreputable publicity, however deserved; except when it is necessary for good and important purposes to do so. That necessity often arises from the impossibility of otherwise giving sufficient precision, and means of authentication, to the facts stated, or the evidence referred to; but in the present instance, the case is different, as the names of the estates, and of the proprietor, to whom no discredit attaches, are quite sufficient for those purposes.

'On the inner side of the cover will be found memoranda in Mr. C———'s handwriting of the annual returns already cited, shewing the progressive decrease of the slaves from 1815 to 1819, both inclusively.

"The book abounds in a variety of entries, containing matters of account, copies of correspondence, and other matters, in general of little use, except to shew its authenticity; but the most material parts for my purpose are contained in a journal of occurrences on the estate, kept by Mr. C———'s manager, for his employer's information during his absence on a voyage to Europe, beginning on the 17th of May 1815, and ending on the 22d day of January in the following year. They extend from 69 to 44*, and in very many places furnish matter curious and instructive to those who are strangers to the interior economy and discipline of a sugar plantation.

"Desertion, petty thefts, and other offences; above all, neglects of grass picking,—painful imprisonments, cruel floggings, and other punishments, for those offences — sickness and deaths, intermingled with feuds between the manager's, and his employer's kept-mistresses; disputes with the creditors, &c., are the constantly recurring topics. But I will confine myself to a few extracts that relate directly to the treatment of the unfortunate slaves.

'P. 67. "May 29th. *Dick Orton came and complained, that Mary Daniel* "*had yesterday (Sunday) stolen two large bunches of bananas, out of the* "*Banana Walk. He also said that she declared she would rob every thing* "*of her master's property, as he was gone. At two o'clock the gang was* "*called over, and she was severely punished.*"

'*Note.*—There is no mention made of the woman's having confessed the charge; which, as to the declaration alleged, seems very improbable; though the stealing bananas to appease her hunger is probable enough. The reader will presently learn to estimate this man's standard of *severity*; and though the indecent exposure of females, when cart-whipped, is, by many of the colonial champions, denied, we find here a roll-calling of the whole gang to witness it.

"The same daily entry adds as follows:—

" *Priscilla was also punished, for quitting the magoss watch last night, and* "*not returning until noon this day.*"

Note.—The mago
ground. It is kept
can steal it only for
severe and sordid s
quitting that duty on

Same page and da
"*day, Friday, and S*
" *opportunity of setti*
" *was brought home*

'*Note.*—Here we re
scribed in this volum

* The order of paging in the book is inverted by the friend who paged it for me; the book itself having been so, after page 43.

the driver's coercion. The poor fellow, whether a little recovered, or whether his sickness had been really feigned, naturally enough wished to escape from his irksome, nauseous prison, on the Sunday, when working under the drivers is not the immediate alternative to bodily confinement; and for this he was cart-whipped.

That sickness or debility was not feigned by him, is highly probable. He must have been a sickly negro; for we find a few months afterwards that he was bloated with the dropsy, and died.

P. 66. "Saturday the 3d June. *Santy, who had been liberated about a "week, was absent from grass at noon, and remained away the whole even-"ing.*

P. 66. "Monday, June the 5th. *Portsmouth ran away from Island Piece, "yesterday, in consequence of two cattle having got into, and damaged four "holes. Priscilla, Betsey, Walker, and little Susannah, ran away. Santy "and Portsmouth were away before. I find that a new plan must be adopted "with the negroes — lenient measures will no longer answer.*"

Note.—We have a specimen of his previous *lenity* towards Priscilla, above; and shall see more of it hereafter as to her and others.

Same page. "Tuesday, June 6th. *Missed grass at night; Domingo, "Lena, Betsy Peters, Joe, and Mary Daniel. Domingo sick. Priscilla "ran away. Santy ran away*"

Note.—Observe the common progress of oppression in the case of this poor woman. She is cart-whipped for quitting her Sunday's watch of the magoss heap. A week after, probably as soon as her wounds were healed, she deserts from her rigid master. She is absent but two days, or, if the last entry is correct, but one day: and, to atone for it, comes home freely, and brings another fugitive with her; yet for this we next find she is again cart-whipped with the utmost severity allowed by the law.

Same page. "Wednesday, June 7th. *Priscilla came in, and received "thirty-nine. She brought Betsey, who was also punished. Punished also "Domingo, Lena, Betsey Peters, Joe, and Mary Daniel, for missing grass "last night. Santy brought home at noon by Scipio and Adams. Gave him "at two o'clock, thirty-nine* SEVERELY, AND THEN PICKLED HIM."

P. 65. "Thursday, June 8. *Two runaways now out, Portsmouth and "Ben. Daphne, magoss watch, got six for magoss being stolen last night.*" (See the above note on the punishment of Priscilla.)

Same page and day. "*This morning, 8th June, Santy, Priscilla, who got "thirty-nine each; Domingo and Lena, who got twelve each, went to the "sick-house, under pretence of being stiff with the licks. It was no pretence "with Santy. I got some peppers out of the garden, and steeped them in hot "water, and bathed Priscilla and Domingo. Lena would not stand the test, "and ran off to her work.*"

Note.—Domingo, who appears thus to have been cart-whipped on the 7th June, for not bringing grass the night before, and tortured with pepper on the 8th, for going to the sick-house for admission, on account of his former punishment, appears, by the above extract of June 6th, to have been sick on the day of his default. It was, therefore, in all probability, an involuntary one; for a sick man could not be well equal to the tedious drudgery of grass picking, after the labours of the day. Yet, when the plea

stiffness in his muscles — a natural effect of the excoriations and incisions usually produced by the tremendous cart-whip—was superadded to the sickness of the preceding day, the torture of washing his wounds with the blistering infusion of capsicum, seems to have produced, for a while, the desired effect; for on the next day, June 9th, we have a return of slaves in the sick-house, in which his name is not inserted. The same is the case on the 10th (see p. 65.) But in the next sick-house return that is given, that of June 14th, Domingo is included; and we find it in every subsequent return to the 7th July (p. 59) inclusive.

"These facts are highly characteristic and instructive. They furnish a specimen of the ordinary process by which the field-negroes are worn down and destroyed: and illustrate well that great source of oppression and cruelty, the difficulty of distinguishing between real and pretended illness, which Dr. Collins, as we have seen, admitted frequently to baffle even the medical attendants, and to produce the most calamit

"When the constitution of a negro begins to decline from him, terrible contests on this score with his man very frequent, are inflamed more and more by their it end either in habitual desertion, or incurable disease was most probably the case with Domingo; for it ap of 1824, that he was not found among the few survi ginal gang.

P. 58. "Thursday July 13th. *Santy ran away at noon, and as there were "two Ordnance at anchor in Sandy Point, and hearing he intended to go with "the sailors, I went off immediately and sent two men after him. I warned the "different serjeants on the beach not to take him on board, and also the officers.*

"Friday 14th July. (same page.) *Santy brought home by the two men at "4 o'clock. Gave him thirty-nine severely. He was disappointed in going "off. None of the serjeants would take him.*"

"Monday July 31. (same page.) *Had an iron collar put round Santy's "neck, and gave him thirty-nine for his last trip.*"

Note. Here we may clearly recognise the impotence and futility of the meliorating laws. The iron collars were prohibited by those laws, as then existing, and solemnly alleged to have been duly executed in this and most other islands: yet this manager is so utterly r needlessly, and with apparent ostentation, his

The absurdity of restricting the use of the c lashes for one offence, is equally manifest. of June, Santy received the full number seve and that this unfeeling manager sarcastically to work was no pretence. He took, in all pr be found after his recovery, to attempt an esca pence of perpetual exile from his home, and this he received again the full legal inflicti cerified: and seventeen days after for the offe was again punished to the same extent, and ha upon his neck. The law was thus openly d its principle inverted in the other; for it wou on him a greater number of lashes than the

parison with the reiteration of the limited number on the 31st, when the wounds of the last whipping were probably yet but imperfectly healed.

I find no further mention in the journal of Santy; nor was it thought necessary to state how he had been treated between the second and third whipping: but he was presumably secured, as usual, in the sick-house, or stocks; since the putting on the collar to obstruct any new attempt to escape, was not thought necessary till the 17th day, after his last punishment. This man's name also is wanting in the list of survivors.

P. 51. On the 28th August, we have a specimen of the way in which the enfeebled slaves are sometimes treated, when they seek, on that account, an exemption from the heavier labours of the gang, and their debility is too manifest to be denied "*Little Hannah pretended she could not hole. She "had every appearance of debility; so I put her to work for this time only, in "the second gang, and directed her to be locked up every night in the sick house*", he adds "*to preserve her health.*" It was a strange way of promoting the health of the poor woman, to make a nauseous imprisonment by night the condition of a temporary alleviation of labour through the day.

P. 52. On the 24th August there is an entry struck through with lines, that, "*Henry and Congo Sarah had been put in the trammels*" (a torturous position in the stocks or bilboes) and Congo Sarah appears, by an entry on the same and the following page, to have been the two next days in the sick-house, from the effects, no doubt, of the trammels.

Throughout these minutes, as long as they contain any entries of punishments and sickness, we find a sad amount of slaves allowed to be really diseased, compared with the number of the gang.

On the 25th and 26th August, for instance, (pp. 51 and 52) we have the following:—"*In sick house—Congo Sarah—Rose. Betsy Peters, sore leg. "Nanno, phthisic. Old Peggy Rose. M. A. Phillis, useless. Frankey "Celia, a vagabond. Francis at home, debility. Adam do., debility. Susan, "fever.*"

From August to January 22d, when the manager's journal ends, I find no further sick-house returns, nor any notice of the delinquencies, or the punishments of slaves; a sudden change of style remarkable enough. Perhaps the manager, on a review of his journal for the preceding two months, thought it better, in future, to omit such details; as not redounding very much to the credit of his administration; and yet, as the book was kept for Mr. C——'s inspection only, (whose personal management, presumably, was not different, or a whit more humane; and certainly was not less fatal to the slaves), a more powerful motive for this sudden and total change of style may be sought for; and, I think, may, by a highly probable conjecture, be found.

In the spring and summer of 1815, the controversy which had arisen in this country, on the proposed registration of slaves by act of parliament, led to new investigations as to the treatment of them in the different islands; and new efforts by the colonial assemblies and planters, to avert parliamentary interposition, by the pretence that every desirable and practicable improvement in that respect, had already taken place. It became again the anxious policy in every island, and of almost all the proprietors in this

country, to dress up the best case they could for that purpose; and to prevent as much as possible, the discovery of such existing practices, as were of ill report in England. I doubt not also, that proprietors of the better sort renewed, sincerely, their instructions to adopt all such lenient and conservatory means, as were compatible with the existing system; and it was generally felt, both here, and in the West Indies, that planters who practised more than ordinary severity, were injuring the common cause.* The prevalence of such views in St. Christopher, may have impressed, on the manager, himself the necessity of greater reserve in recording his treatment of the slaves in his possession, and the sickness that ensued; and Mr. C——, on his arrival in Europe, might have found, from the spirit prevailing here, that it was prudent to send cautions to his manager, to prevent any needless discovery of the causes of that extraordinary mortality that prevailed on his rented estates. As he sailed for Europe on the 17th May, there was time enough before the end of August, for the receipt of letters from him after his arrival here, when he probably found these motives for general precaution prevalent and urgent. It is, at least, a remarkable coincidence that the time of the probable receipt of instructions on these subjects, exactly coincides with the singular change of style in the journal before me. There is no entry of punishments after the 28th of August, nor of sickness after the 4th of September; though other occurrences on the estate are recorded daily, with all the former punctuality, down to the end of the journal on January 22d, the day after Mr. C—— returned. I find, on the 4th of September, an entry of a runaway slave being brought home; but not a word of any punishment he received.

It cannot be supposed that the whip, from that time, ceased for near five months to be in use, or the sick-house to be occupied; and if it could, the following entries would, as to the latter at least, shew the contrary.

P. 44. "*Franky Celia died the* 1*st December* 1815."

Same page. "*On the* 14*th December died Rachel Burom.*"

Same page. "*On the 7th January, Sunday morning, died Jack Statia; he "was bloated up like old Portsmouth, he had not been in the field for two "weeks.*"

If we add to these an entry on the 15th of August of the death of a woman called "*Grace*" (p. 54.) of whose disease nothing is said, we shall have a loss in less than five months, of four slaves out of 107 left in the managers possession.

As three of these slaves perished after the entries of punishment ceased, and only one before that period, we may, not unreasonably, infer that the general treatment was not mended; especially as it appears that Jack Statia, a dropsical patient, was worked in the field till within a fortnight of his death.

It may also be concluded, that neither before Mr. C————'s absence nor after his return, was there, under his own management, a more merciful administration; for the whole loss in the year of his voyage to

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* Local inquiries and returns as to the decrease of slaves, and its causes, were also known to be impending.

Europe, being six, falls considerably short of the annual average during the seven years of which he has himself recorded the progressive decrease; the collective amount during that period, being 54; exclusive of the intermediate additions by birth and purchase.

Indeed, it is not credible, that the manager would have minuted, for his employer's information, conduct such as this journal describes, had he not known that Mr. C————'s feelings towards, and ordinary treatment of, slaves, were consonant to his own; and there are other facts leading to the conclusion, that he had no fear of censure, unless for erring on the humane, or liberal side. It appears for instance from various passages in the book referred to, that Mr. C—— had left on the estate a woman, his kept mistress, between whom and the manager, and the manager's mistress, frequent disputes arose; the former apparently assuming a right not only to receive her own company on the estate, but to interfere with its management in regard to the slaves; and this interference by *her*, who doubtless understood on what ground she was most likely to be supported by Mr. C———— on his return, seems to have been only on the side of a rigid and unfeeling economy.

In a letter of complaint against her to Mr. C——'s attorney of the 9th June (p. 13) the manager thus writes: "*If I wish the sick to have any additional nou-*
"*rishment to preserve their lives (and one has died since Mr. C. went), this*
"*woman thinks proper to tell me I will spoil the negroes, that they are not used*
"*to it, and that I feed them like pigeons; when the utmost I have given them,*
"*is one pint of oatmeal a day in gruel, and two spoonfuls of wine. If I send*
"*forward any covering or convenience for wretches in the sick-house, who are*
"*just quitting this world, she proceeds in the same manner.*" "She has had the
"impudence to introduce three mulatto women, who have been here since
"Tuesday morning, to my great annoyance; for I have had five of them in
"the house with me, which is rather too many." "This woman has within
"this hour broke out in an open attack on me and *my girl*, who was cooking
"my dinner, and used such infamous language as I never heard before in
"this country," &c.

It seems full enough to prove how little the manager's treatment of the slaves was thought wrong, or discreditable by Mr. C————, that he adopted this plantation record as his own, immediately after his return, using its blank leaves for copying in his own letters and memoranda.

I need hardly apologise to my readers for troubling them with so many extracts from an original document thus authenticated, and which furnishes so lively a picture of the interior manners and discipline of a sugar estate; a *desideratum* which it is unfortunately very difficult, or impossible, by any ordinary means to supply; and still more so give it with that species of decisive evidence to which my plan confines me, the testimony of the planters themselves.

But the most important use of this case remains to be opened.

Here we have an illustration, not only of the enormous destruction of human life that takes place among the field negroes of a plantation, when oppression is pushed a little beyond its ordinary bounds; but of the impunity with which it is attended.—It was notorious during twelve years, in the small island where this case arose, that the slaves on the consolidated estates of Fahie's and Orton's, were decreasing with a rapidity that was,

and only could be, attributed to the severity and cruel economy with which they were worked and treated. The parochial returns for taxes, as minuted by Mr. C—— in this book, the amounts of which every slave-holder in the same parish must have had public notice of, and had an interest in observing, attested the extraordinary mortality. The lessor had a much stronger interest in the case; and it appears from correspondence in the same book, that his attornies on the spot were not wholly inattentive to the lamentable ruin of the gang. (see p. 8.) Yet no interference of the criminal ribunals or police arrested the murderous process.

I have put more than one friend of mine, then resident in the island, on their defence for this omission; which, having been themselves engaged in the slave system, they would not unwillingly have made, if they could; but their only excuse was the common one, that evidence of acts punishable by law could not be found; the slaves not being admissible witnesses. One of them, indeed, stated, that a short time before Mr. C———'s death and when his final ruin was sealed, he had been brought before the magistrates for some offence against the meliorating act, and committed for want of bail; but he spoke, I believe, from information, not having been in the West Indies at the time; and another gentleman has since stated to me from his own knowledge, that no such commitment had taken place: but he added that the late attorney-general of the colony, Mr. Woodley, having found evidence which he deemed sufficient to establish against Mr. C——— some punishable act of maltreatment of the slaves, had prosecuted him *ex officio*, and preferred a bill of indictment; which was thrown out by the grand jury. I cannot now ascertain which of these statements, or whether either of them, was correct; but deem the latter highly credible, because it appears, from papers printed by the House of Commons, that the same attorney-general (now I lament to say no more) interposed in other and recent cases, to check the general infraction of the meliorating laws; and met uniformly with disappointment from the jurymen of the island. In one of these cases, we have seen that the grand jury not only threw out the bill, but took violent offence at its presentation.

For giving this case to the public, I owe no apology to the respectable gentleman whose name I have mentioned as proprietor and lessor of the estates; for the facts that I have stated reflect no reproach on him. In committing the destiny of his slaves to men, whose treatment of them he had no power to controul, he acted indeed as I, if unfortunate enough to be the owner of such property, certainly would not do; nor should the law, while it recognises the harsh right of property in human beings, permit it to be transferred in a way that separates the power of abusing it, from the entire interest in its preservation. I have long since given my views on this subject to the public.* I hold it a cruel and wanton extension of an indefensible principle, that men should not only be allowed to hold and sell their fellow-creatures as goods and chattels; but to demise them for a term of years, giving to the tenant all the owner's formidable governing powers, and reserving only to himself reversionary rights in the slaves and their future issue. But such, alas! is the law; and such is the too frequent practice of West

* See my volume on the law of Slavery, p. 84 to 87.

India proprietors resident in Europe, to make the adoption of it by Mr Wells any stain upon his character. He was educated in England, was here when these estates devolved on him by patrimonial devise, and I believe has never since visited the West Indies. He probably, therefore, thought he was dealing with his property in no objectionable way, or even in the best way for the slaves of an absent master, when he was placing it in the hands of the lessees; and certainly could not anticipate such truly calamitous results.

But there is one possible imputation or suspicion, against which I feel it a duty to guard this gentleman; for as a member of the West India body, with important interests not perhaps altogether invulnerable by his fellow-colonists abroad, he might be materially prejudiced by it; I mean the suppicion that he either approved of my giving this case to the public, or in any degree enabled me to do so. I therefore think it right to declare, that I have, neither directly or indirectly, derived any part of my information from Mr. Wells; and am confident that he does not know, or suspect, that I am possessed of it, or that any such documents as I have here referred to, have come to my hands. I have never seen, or had any intercourse with him, since he was a boy at school; and still better to guard him from any suspicion of the kind alluded to, will add the reason of our being strangers to each other, though his father was my friend, and his connections by marriage touch on the same family circle with my own. It has been on my part, and probably on his, because I have been proscribed as a public enemy to the sugar colonies. I have, in consequence, long made it a point of delicacy not to seek the acquaintance of any West India proprietor, who has not recently sought for mine.

If an apology be thought necessary for using Mr. Wells's name without asking his consent, the same reasons will, I trust, fully supply it. To have withheld it, would have been a reserve injurious to the credit of my statements; and to have asked his consent to use it would have been to make a request with which he could not in prudence comply. But there will be no such objection to his contradicting my statements, if untrue, or if the authenticity of the written documents I refer to is questioned; and this is another reason for my giving the proprietor's name. Any opponent, or any reader, who has the honour to know Mr. Wells, and doubts any of the facts I have stated as to the loss of slaves, or other matters within that gentleman's knowledge, may thus easily put their truth and accuracy to the test of an enquiry; and I am too well informed of them to have any fear of the result.

Here I willingly conclude those examples of recent cruelties, to adduce which I was defied.

The number of them is of little importance for the only purpose I have in view,—that of marking the still unreformed bad spirit which characterises West Indian Societies in regard to such abuses of a master's power. It is

no more necessary to that end to multiply examples, than it is to count the petechial spots on a feverish patient. A few of these will suffice to mark the malignant character of the disease. But no thinking man will believe that such abuses could meet with popular favour, or impunity, in any society in which they were of rare occurrence.

THE END.

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